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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

THE FEMALE VAMPIRE AND THE POLITICS OF GENDER

BY

DONALD TRAVIS ANDERSON ©

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

Edmonton, Alberta

Fall, 1992

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Don Anderson

Donald T. Anderson
#302, 10730-83rd Avenue
Edmonton, Alberta
T6E 2E4

September 11th, 1992

UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled "The Female Vampire and the Politics of Gender" submitted by Donald Travis Anderson in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

G. Stephenson
Glennis Stephenson

Douglas Barbour
Douglas Barbour

Milan V. Dimić
Milan Dimić

September 11th, 1992

For Glennis, who salvaged what was nearly lost.

And for Marisa, with her gift of all the things
I never could have found on my own.

Abstract

The focus of this study is the female vampire in literature written in English and the thematic concerns she has represented over the last one and a half centuries. Essentially, these concerns are ideological, for the vampiric woman repeatedly serves as a means of examining the social status of all women. Beginning with a consideration of such relatively early works as Bram Stoker's Dracula (1897) and C. W. Webber's Spiritual Vampirism (1853), it will be shown that the initial trend of vampire fiction is to demonstrate a conservative--and even misogynist--fear of the politically empowered woman. However, with the publication of Sheridan Le Fanu's "Carmilla" (1872) and Marie Corelli's The Young Diana (1918), the theme evolves into a sympathetic treatment of women living under a state of patriarchal tyranny. Finally, I shall turn to two recent texts, Suzy McKee Charnas's The Vampire Tapestry (1980) and Whitley Strieber's The Hunger (1981), in order to demonstrate two possible conclusions to the female vampire's cycle of development: in the case of the former work, a male--but ultimately feminine--vampire reveals the hopelessness of the female situation by demonstrating the insurmountable obstacle patriarchy presents, while the latter novel suggests that the key to social injustice is not gender-based, but rather endemic to the very nature of humanity. The overall pattern, though, remains clear: the politics of gender are the very core around which the female vampire is developed.

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Introduction

"Women vampires are among the most common and popular subjects for monster stories," writes Charles G. Waugh (9). Certainly, the body of vampire fiction in English over the last one hundred and fifty years supports such a statement; there are at least as many female vampires in literature as there are male, probably more. In explaining why this is so, the issues that need to be addressed are many. Is vampire fiction little more than a literary expression of misogyny that presents women as fundamentally monstrous? Is the female vampire in any way different from her male counterpart? Do these women generally represent a fixed and formulaic idea, or does their function change over the course of literary history? Such questions provide the framework for the chapters which follow.

Looking to the evidence of six representative works dealing with female--or merely feminine--vampires, this thesis takes its shape around the proposition that the female vampire is decidedly ideological in nature, becoming from her first inception a rich and complex symbol of women's frustration at living under a state of social and political patriarchy. As a literary symbol, her treatment is as polemic as it is diverse: while many authors portray the vampiric woman as an ideological danger, there are those who present her as the moral spokesperson for the rights of her sex, and there are still others who use her as the means of calling into question our understanding of the very concept of patriarchy. When taken as a whole, however, the body of literature surrounding the female vampire demonstrates a remarkable evolution: beginning with the earliest works, there is a pattern of a conservative fear of women being gradually displaced by an ever-increasing degree of empathy with the female condition. In this light, the motif of the female vampire can be re-read as both a literary and a sociological correlative to the historical emancipation of women.

Chapter I: Dancing with the Devil

"The women looked pretty, except when you got near them."
-- Bram Stoker, Dracula

Although not the first work of vampire fiction, Bram Stoker's Dracula (1897) has come to be the standard against which all other such works are judged. It is here, then, that any consideration of the vampire motif should begin, particularly when the topic of investigation is gender construction and female social power, a theme which lies at the core of Stoker's work. Essentially, the novel presents the vampire in two possible contexts: either that of the male vampire who issues a challenge to the power of other males from within the ritualized structure of social patriarchy, or that of the female vampire whose empowered existence is an implicit challenge to the nature of patriarchy itself.

When considering Dracula in light of its backdrop of patriarchal ideology, the significance of the hierarchical organization of the novel's primary male characters cannot be overly stressed. This is not the story of a band of equal fellows guided under the gentle leadership of an elderly professor; quite the contrary, it is a novel about a tightly structured and highly formalized social hierarchy that has as its fundamental basis the exclusively male prerogatives of authority and tyranny.

Stoker begins his presentation of this society by carefully documenting the establishment of a male pecking order. Throughout the novel, the male characters are described in terms which suggest, and ultimately validate, each man's social ranking relative to that of his fellows. Professor Van Helsing is firmly established as the leader of this group. His unquestionable right to such a position of authority is fully demonstrated by Seward's glowing summary of Van Helsing's virtues:

> He is a seemingly arbitrary man, but this because he knows what he is talking about better than any one else. He is a philosopher and a metaphysician, and one of the most advanced scientists of his day; and he has, I believe, an absolutely open mind. This with an iron nerve, a temper of the ice-brook, an indomitable resolution, self-command, and toleration exalted from virtues to blessings, and the kindliest and truest heart that beats--these form his equipment for the noble work that he is doing for mankind--work both in theory and practise, for his views are as wide as his all-embracing sympathy. (Dracula 121)

This is not idle praise. Van Helsing is all that Seward implies and more. He is a neurological expert, in his own words an authority on "the brain and all that belongs to him and all that follow from him" (190). He is also a qualified lawyer (170). A man of scientific and legal distinction, he is even given the religious honor of having an Indulgence from the Church (216). In virtually every conceivable way, Van Helsing is marked as a man near the apex of his society.

Somewhere beneath Van Helsing's lofty perch, Stoker scatters his other male characters, each of whom has his own distinct position. Seward and Jonathan Harker, for example, comprise between them the second echelon in the male hierarchy, with Seward being the marginally higher ranking of the two. Like Van Helsing, Seward is a doctor, which is certainly the profession given the most organizational authority in Stoker's novel. While obviously not of Van Helsing's calibre, Seward is still a man of distinguished accomplishment: Van Helsing even notes that in the limited medical field of insanity, Seward knows much more than he does (254). Of course, the final relationship between the two men is that of teacher and student, with Van Helsing referring to Seward as his "favourite pupil" (199). Still, as a favored student, Seward is given more access to Van Helsing's thoughts and counsel than any other character, and is able to share somewhat in the professor's authoritative command: after responding to a knock at a door which intrudes upon his conversation with Van Helsing and Harker, Seward states "Quincey and Godalming . . . entered in obedience to our summons" (290), thus demonstrating a degree of command that he shares with Van Helsing and even Harker. Compared to

Seward's, Harker's exact position within the hierarchy is somewhat less clear, but the clues we are given imply that Harker is outranked only by Seward and Van Helsing. Like Seward, Harker is a professional, but a lawyer necessarily plays less of a role than a doctor in this novel centered around the withdrawal, injection, and transferral of blood. Furthermore, while the "great nerve" and "daring" he displays when imprisoned in Dracula's castle earns him the epithet of "a good specimen of manhood" (231), Harker is relatively new to his position of power--a fact which is emphasized by his sudden promotion upon Mr. Hawkins's death--and is somewhat uncertain and hesitant in the way he fills it. Indeed, as Mina tells us, Harker often "begins to doubt himself" (165).

It is in the lowest echelon of the male hierarchy that Stoker positions his remaining male characters: Godalming, Morris, and Renfield. Of these three, Godalming and Morris loosely share the upper rank. From the start, however, the place they share is one of obeisance rather command. Morris first acknowledges the authority of others by telling Seward, "You and the Dutchman tell me what to do, and I'll do it" (159), and it is not long before Godalming sings to the same tune, allowing Van Helsing to direct the slaying of Lucy, and saying only "Tell me what I am to do, and I will do it" (221). Yet, even between these two men, a distinction is made, such that Godalming is made marginally the higher ranking of the pair. While both share the economic power of extreme wealth--

as Mina confirms when she calls Godalming "rich" and says that Morris "also has plenty of money" (360)--it is Godalming's aristocratic upbringing that gives him the final edge. Mention is made, for instance, of the fact that Morris often speaks in "American slang" (67), and it is later implied that he is of the least use in chasing Dracula across eastern Europe because "he does not speak any foreign language" (351). Undoubtedly, though, both Godalming and Morris vastly outrank Renfield, who suffers the double ignominy of imprisonment (physical domination by other men) and madness (a lack of autonomy over his own mind). In every way, Renfield is the victim of the will of other, more dominant, men, before whom we repeatedly witness him "pleading" and "cringing" (117). Indeed, while the other male characters band together in their fight against Dracula, Renfield prostrates himself before the vampire's authority and begins to worship him as a god (112).

The most productive critical focus, however, takes shape around not the simple fact that Stoker's male characters are hierarchically organized, but rather the question of how that hierarchical structure is maintained. This is best demonstrated by the many rules and regulations by which the men seem to live in their relations with each other. Dracula brings this to the fore when Harker attempts to smuggle an unsigned letter out of the castle. With the letter finally in his hands, Dracula refers to it as "a vile thing, an outrage upon friendship and hospitality" (51). Clearly, a literal reading of these words yields nothing, for Dracula bears nothing but ill will for Harker and his fellows. Yet, beneath the surface, one begins to see in Dracula's protestation a kind of superficial propriety, as if part of a hollow code of behavior that seems to be one thing while it is, in fact, quite the opposite. Significantly, Van Helsing also suggests that this duplicity is the foundation upon which male affairs are based. Relating the story of a London gentleman whose house was broken into by an ingenious thief who auctioned off the furniture before selling the house itself, Van Helsing concludes by saying, "This was all done en regle; and in our work we shall be en regle too" (299). In short, Van Helsing's message is that even though male affairs are based upon a code of rules which must be circumvented, the code itself must be upheld, even if only for the sake of decorum. In this light, it is hardly surprising that the novel is virtually littered with references to games as metaphors for male relations. This is made particularly clear when Morris bluntly asks, "Is this a game?", to which Van Helsing simply replies, "It is" (216). It is most suitable, too, that the game Van Helsing most frequently uses as an analogy for their situation is chess, a game based upon a strict and complex set of rules. Consider, for instance, Van Helsing's cry, "The first gain is ours! Check to the King!" (156) and his suggestion that the struggle against Dracula is a "chess game, which we play for the stake of human souls" (259). The analogy is both telling and perceptive, for the struggle against Dracula is very much like a game of chess. The would-be vampire hunters, for example, cannot simply single out and slay Dracula in a direct confrontation; rather, they must embark upon a series of discrete moves, first tracing Dracula's movements and the locations of his coffins, and then forcing him to retreat from London before finally destroying him. Similarly, the two sides only attack each other indirectly throughout most of the novel, engaging in a chess-like war of attrition as Dracula seeks to capture Mina and Lucy while his opponents attempt to destroy all of his coffins.

With the novel's patriarchal organization thus structured upon a set of gaming rules, the goal of the game becomes obvious: it is a quest for power and dominance. Certainly, this is the entire objective upon which Dracula's very existence is based. A male himself, he is also a rogue, seeking to deny all other male authority in an act of will intended to establish his position at the pinnacle of the patriarchy. Renfield, for example, is told that he must "fall down and worship" Dracula (285), while the other male characters are warned by Dracula's threat, "[Y]ou and others shall be mine--my creatures, to do my bidding and to be my jackals when I want to feed" (312). What is at issue here is the right to rule, with Dracula simultaneously advocating his own authority and rejecting that of others when he proclaims, "I am noble; I am boyar. . . . I have been so long master that I would be master still--or at least that none other should be master of me" (30).

Dracula's ambition, however, is much more than a solitary act of rebellion; indeed, it is the model--however extreme--of normal male behavior as Stoker presents it. Admittedly, many critics interpret Dracula's behavior somewhat differently, viewing him as a personification of all that is foreign and different. John Allen Stevenson is one such example, writing that Dracula "defines the vampire not as a monstrous father but as a foreigner, as someone who threatens and terrifies precisely because he is an outsider" (139). In short, Stevenson maintains that "Dracula is, above all, strange to those he encounters--strange in his habits, strange in his appearance, strange in his physiology" (140), an opinion which is shared by Veronica Hollinger in her claim that the novel's central focus is upon the extreme "paranoia towards the figure of the alien Other" (154). What these critics ultimately fail to address, though, is Dracula's profound ideological similarity to the mortal males who are his sworn foes. There is a vastly more intimate connection between the behavior of the male vampire and the male humans than Stevenson indicates when he argues that Dracula only reflects the human characters when he "literalizes" and "exaggerates" human traits (143), becoming a parodic--and vaguely distant--distortion of humanity. In truth, Dracula distorts nothing, at least not ideologically. Throughout the novel, there is a repeated pattern of males dominating over their inferiors in acts of tyranny and oppression that exactly mirror Dracula's acts and words. Seward, for instance, is better described as Renfield's jailor than his doctor. It is not a patient that Seward sees in his ward, but rather his "own pet lunatic" (239). Moreover, this attitude of domination towards Renfield is by no means restricted to Seward, as is shown when the doctor is joined by two workmen and together they "began to master" (163) Renfield. Even Van Helsing is not above physically asserting his authority and putting the others in their rightful places; when Arthur fails to obey the professor's order to refrain from kissing Lucy, he is "actually hurled . . . almost across the room" (168) by the irate leader. This pattern extends from the top of the patriarchal structure to its very foundation: even at the bottom levels, a male with virtually no authority whatsoever will still find a way dominate someone or something. Stoker makes this point quite emphatically with his presentation of Renfield, a "zoophagous . . . maniac" (80) who, despite being among the very dregs of the male hierarchy, manages to dominate lesser creatures as he eats his way up the food chain of flies, spiders, and birds in an attempt to establish himself as the dominant predator. Presumably, it is the record of this consumption that Renfield scribbles in his notebook (125), thus himself becoming Stoker's most succinct image of a male frantically calculating his score in the world.

It is Renfield's pathetic attempt at self-aggrandizement, though, that gives rise to an interesting observation: the male social organization is neither static nor stable. Instead, a recurring pattern of male behavior reveals that these men want to dominate not just those of lesser authority, but those who currently hold positions of higher status as well. For example, even when Harker is held prisoner in Dracula's castle at the novel's beginning, he directly challenges Dracula's authority over him, stating, "The Count's warning came into my mind, but I took a pleasure in disobeying it" (45). There is more than simple disobedience at issue here, however. What is truly at stake is nothing short of violent, destructive rebellion, as Harker shows us when he tries to kill Dracula in his sleep with a shovel (60). Thus begins a series of verbal taunts and physical attacks aimed at male authority figures from within the male power structure itself. It does not matter how low a rank the challenger holds; it is simply the nature of the males Stoker presents at least to challenge--if not ultimately to overthrow--all attempts to control them. Even so lowly a figure as Renfield is filled with moments of utter rebellion. At first, this is manifested in his attempt to escape from Seward's asylum (111). Ultimately, though, Renfield's defiance is expressed through physical violence when he attacks Seward with a dinner knife (149) and Dracula with his bare hands (286). Everywhere in this novel, men are challenging every act of authority to which they perceive themselves as being subject. Not even Van Helsing's firmly established leadership of the vampire hunters can remain entirely unchallenged, as Stoker demonstrates when Seward reminds the older man, "I am younger and stronger" (130).

Taken as a whole, the patriarchal organization that Stoker presents seems to be founded upon the contradictory impulses of political conservatism and radical ambition. The conservative impulse, on the one hand, is clear. Each man is reluctant, if not totally unwilling, to be made the slave of another. Yet, at the same instant, each man seeks the power with which to dominate his fellows, striving to impose upon others the very servitude he seeks to avoid himself. If these tenets upon which the novel's patriarchy is based appear to give rise to an essentially paradoxical doctrine, it is nothing less than the paradox of patriarchal organization as it has always existed. Seeking to implement the stability and control that are the goals of virtually all social organizations, patriarchy is simultaneously based upon a destabilizing challenge to the concept of control itself, through the competitiveness of its members. In the case of Dracula, Stoker presents this paradox with a deft hand indeed when he presents it through the male fascination with conflict. Consider, for instance, Dracula's boast, "We Szekelys have a right to be proud, for in our veins flows the blood of many brave races who fought as the lion fights, for lordship" (37). These are words we would expect from the brutal rebel who seeks to win for himself the throne of the patriarchy. As part of the patriarchal establishment, Harker would be expected to battle conservatively against the destabilizing influence Dracula represents. Battle against Dracula Harker certainly does, but not, however, before confessing that he finds the nearby town of Bistritz, with its history of fire, famine, disease, and warfare, to be "a very interesting old place" (13). Dracula himself continues Harker's train of thought when he proclaims, "Why, there is hardly a foot of soil in all this region that has not been enriched by the blood of men, patriots, or invaders. In old days there were stirring times" (31). What is made clear is that both men give voice--although in varying degrees--to the attraction they feel to the forces of violence and conflict, forces upon which they themselves are based.

Stoker goes farther, though, in demonstrating that the patriarchy implicitly sanctions the very power struggles and internal violence that threaten its stability; he even exposes and undermines the traditionally male concept of heroism that the novel--at least on its surface level--espouses. Such is the case with Harker's actions in Dracula's castle. In his own eyes, Harker comes to exist more firmly "as a man" (62) as a result of his attack upon Dracula and his desperate attempt to escape by scaling the castle walls, and his fellows confirm his opinion when they bestow upon him the heroic epithet of "a good specimen of manhood" (231). Likewise, it is the act of struggling against Dracula that allows Renfield to rise momentarily above his madness in one brief instant of desperate heroism, and Morris to come to his end in a meaningful, heroic death. Each instance, however, ultimately serves to demonstrate the fundamental need that these men have for Dracula's act of rebellion. In each case, the man who struggles against Dracula is forced to rise above his own limitations, to become more than he once was. In itself, that is as likely a definition of heroism as any. Curiously, however, the heroic values around which the established patriarchy rallies are entirely predicated upon the destabilizing challenge that Dracula represents. Essentially, the male order derives its strength from the force which threatens it and without that threat, the patriarchy would be rendered weak and ineffectual. Thus does Stoker present to the reader a political structure which is based upon--and therefore implicitly condones--direct challenges to its authority.

Yet, this system, which actually requires dissent, simultaneously demonstrates a remarkable distinction: the threats and challenges that are required are internal matters within the patriarchy, not external. It is here, then, that a consideration of Stoker's female vampires, and Stoker's female characters more generally, can begin, for by definition, to be female is to be denied patriarchal authority, a point which Stoker's novel drives home with particular force.

Essentially, women are excluded from positions of patriarchal power in Stoker's novel by means of their predefined role as political non-entities. Entirely removed from the myriad power struggles in which the men engage, the ideal woman in Dracula is one whose limited existence is expressed solely through her qualities of passivity, nurture, and supportiveness. As a result, Stoker directs part of the novel as a would-be chapbook for female behavior, relating the story of Lucy's upcoming marriage to Holmwood and the guidance provided by the moral example of Mina. This is hardly overstating the case; by the second paragraph of the opening chapter, we already find Harker making note of a recipe he wishes to take to Mina (11). This image of woman as a servant to the appetite of man is again stated near the novel's end, when, referring to Mina, Van Helsing writes, "Then when I return to the fire she have my supper ready" (368). It is not the attitudes of men, however, but the very deeds of Mina herself that are most telling in this regard. Not only a cook, she serves untiringly as stenographer and general secretary as well, and while these skills might make Mina appear stronger than most women in her historical context, they are nevertheless skills of subservience. Indeed, the whole of her existence seems to be caught up in an overwhelming desire to serve a man; writing to Lucy, she refers to the "duty" a woman owes her husband (115). Mina reiterates this notion when she writes, "When we are married I shall be able to be useful to Jonathan" (63), and just how neurotically she pursues this belief is demonstrated when she memorizes the train schedules of Europe "so as to be helpful" (343). In this manner, Stoker portrays Mina, and the sex she represents, as a nurturing figure of male support, one whose role is to watch from the sidelines of male affairs and provide moral and physical relief to the embattled men. For instance, one of Mina's first major actions is to travel to Budapest to "nurse" (108) Harker back to health. But there is more here than a simple act of loving kindness; just how much more is shown when she interrupts a letter to Lucy, writing, "I must stop, for Jonathan is waking--I must attend to my husband!" (116). In these few words, Mina unwittingly captures the whole truth of her limited existence, for her dutiful--even slavish--attendance upon a male overrides every other impulse of which she is capable, including her basic need for discourse with another woman. Indeed, this issue involves much more than a single letter, for the written word is the only form of power to which Mina is allowed independent access, and even this small privilege cannot free her from her role as a servant. The ultimate support mechanism, Mina flies from one man to the next, applying moral bandages to every wound or bruise she finds. This is exactly what the men expect and require from her, of course, which is made clear when her comforting words briefly restore Renfield to his former glory as a "quite reasonable" and "polished gentleman" (240) capable of speaking with "courtesy and respect" (239), and again when she provides a shoulder for Holmwood's tears (236). Even the most brief moment of male self-doubt is made the target of Mina's zealousness when, referring to Harker, she testifies, "He begins to doubt himself. I try to cheer him up, and my belief in him helps him to have a belief in himself" (165).

The result of all this feminine devotion is the realization of woman as a construct of the patriarchy. Harker focuses our attention on this chain of development when he compares the womanly ideal of Mina with the erotic sexual reality of the female vampires in Dracula's castle: "Mina is a woman, and there is naught in common" (61). Clearly, Harker's vision of the female does not allow for the qualities of aggression and appetite that he finds in Dracula's women, qualities that he firmly believes Mina to be without. This male value system, which extols the virtues of the disempowered woman, is further demonstrated by Van Helsing's praise of Mina:

> She is one of God's women, fashioned by His own hand to show us men and other women that there is a heaven where we can enter, and that its light can be here on earth. So true, so sweet, so noble, so little an egoist. (194)

What we ultimately find, then, is a system in which women are virtually apotheosized for their qualities of devotion and selflessness and utterly condemned for any instance of independent, self-interested desire.

The astonishing depth to which this concept of the female permeates the social structure in the novel is demonstrated by a curious fact: the female characters themselves are among its most staunch advocates. It is to be expected, perhaps, that Mr. Hawkins should make Harker the sole beneficiary in his will, passing on the legacy of his business to his apprentice and symbolic son (164); such is the nature of patrimony. Yet, when Mrs. Westenra leaves her entire estate to Holmwood (174)--whom Lucy has not even married--Stoker goes so far as to show us a financially empowered woman embracing the values of the patriarchy over the interests of her own daughter. Indeed, it is as if she seeks to redress her crime of inheriting her husband's wealth and inadvertently coming to power in the first place. However, even if Lucy had lived long enough to witness this arrangement, it is doubtful that she would have objected. After all, Lucy maintains that a woman should not keep a secret from a man, let alone a fortune: "A woman," she declares, "ought to tell her husband everything" (66). To her supposed credit, Lucy even attempts to live up to these words, striving to become the male ideal of the selfless woman when she says to Seward, "Tell Arthur everything. . . . I do not care for myself, but all for him" (120). In effect, Lucy's words serve as a validation of her socially powerless role and the men who define it. She becomes a spokesperson condoning her own imprisonment, spewing forth such propagandistic statements as "Men like women, certainly their wives, to be quite as fair as they are; and women, I am afraid, are not always quite as fair as they should be" (66) and thus implicitly supporting the patriarchy's exclusion of women from roles of authority. Of course, the most vocal advocate of the male order is Mina. "[T]he world seems full of good men" (230), she tells us, men who "are more tolerant [than women], bless them" (99). Just who these tolerant men are is a mystery, but Mina remains undeterred in her insistent adoration of the male race, even going to the ridiculous extreme of praising the jealous, possessive destruction of women:

> [T]here have been times when brave men have killed their wives and their womenkind, to keep them from falling into the hands of the enemy. . . . It is men's duty towards those whom they love. (336)

And yet, despite their complicit support of the political machine that enslaves them, these seemingly conquered and dominated women begin to sow the seeds of rebellion, almost against their own wills. It is here that another side of female nature quietly begins to emerge, with Mina and Lucy making "little plans" and "castles in the air" (63)--seemingly innocent daydreams that contain within them something more.

As Stoker goes on to show, each castle begins to take on substance and every little plan marks an act of independent volition that is in direct conflict with the role of women as defined by the patriarchy.

This theme of the latent female rebellion that lurks beneath a mask of propriety has its most overt example in character of Lucy, who begins down the road of dissent when she awakens to the call of her own sexuality. Clearly presented in the novel's patriarchal terms as a simple and naive girl whose time has come to be married and made the possession of a man, Lucy directly challenges her predefined role as the sexual possession of a single male when she asks, "Why can't they let a girl marry three men, or as many as want her . . . ?" (68). Gail B. Griffin notes that Lucy's first reaction to these thoughts is to denigrate herself by defining her "gender as unfair, cowardly, unworthy of noble men" (144) and this is certainly a valid observation: Lucy asks "[W]hy are men so noble when we women are so little worthy of them?" (68) and later reminds herself of the passive example of Mina by stating, "I must imitate Mina, and keep writing things down" (118). However, despite her internal struggle, Lucy cannot remain inactive once her own desires have begun to assert themselves. Hence, we find her kissing two of her suitors--Morris and Holmwood (69)--and experiencing what she calls a sense of "exultation" (67). Lucy obviously delights in her new-found power over men, and while superficially saddened, she revels in her conquests, proclaiming, "I am so happy that I don't know what to do with myself" (67). Her joy, and her resultant pride, are certainly well-justified, for even the distant Van Helsing falls under the spell of her female wiles; as he tells Seward, "She charm me, and for her, if not for you or disease, I come" (124).

Lucy's story, then, becomes very much like that of Dracula: it is the story of an individual who rises--or attempts to rise--to new levels of power. Moreover, like Dracula, Lucy demonstrates a comfortable deftness with the reins of authority. For instance, once she has rejected one suitor, she finds it much easier to reject another, as she suggests when, referring to Morris, she writes, "[I]t didn't seem half so hard to refuse him as it did poor Dr. Seward" (67). Admittedly, such refusal of a lover is one of the limited powers women frequently are allowed under patriarchy, but Lucy seizes this authority with particular zeal, taking more than she is intended to have and turning it into the means of controlling the men who would control her. In effect, what Lucy has accomplished is nothing short of regendering herself male, in a political sense. No longer a passive object of male possession, she strives to emulate the male patterns of behavior that consist largely of the impulse to control and dominate. Yet, being a woman in the society that Stoker portrays, Lucy is denied the male opportunities of expressing that aggression and she therefore turns to the one avenue left available to her: female sexuality. In her hands, sexuality is honed into a veritable weapon, and once she attains the pinnacle of her rebellion as marked by her transformation into a vampire, that weapon becomes a potent one. Consider, for example, the later confrontations between Lucy and the novel's men. From her bedside to her tomb, the male characters seem united in their resolve to save her, first from her illness and later from her vampiric self. The imagery that surrounds their interaction with Lucy tells quite another story, however. As she progresses to greater levels of sexual power, Lucy is described with such terms as "soft" and "voluptuous" (167), terms which implicitly suggest the pejorative eye of an enamored male observer. As this imagistic pattern continues, what we find is the degree of authority with which Lucy's sexual being has empowered her and which allows her to subvert and expose the pretences of male ideology. For instance, Van Helsing makes constant references to the religious and loving duty the men must perform by destroying the sexually aggressive creature which Lucy has become, claiming that they must "strike in God's name, that so all may be well with the dead that we love, and that the Un-Dead pass away" (222). Van Helsing's explanation is mere posturing, though, and it is Lucy's evocative sexuality which makes this clear. When Van Helsing examines her, his words come not as a statement, but rather as an "ejaculation" (166). Similarly, when Seward and Van Helsing search Lucy's tomb, the reader is told how the candle's "sperm dropped in white patches" (203) onto the coffin, which is then set upon with Van Helsing's phallicly suggestive "turnscrew" (203). Of course, it is the final scene with Lucy that is the most telling. As the group of men gather around the coffin to watch Holmwood drive "deeper and deeper the mercy-bearing stake" into a "writhing and quivering" (222) female body, their holy mission is exposed as an utter sham. What is left, instead, is a body of imagery that Christopher Craft describes as "murderous phallicism" (182) and which Phyllis A. Roth steadfastly maintains "needs no comment" (114). In short, the scene better describes a gang rape than it does a spiritual cleansing and, taken as a whole, it captures an overall pattern of men's sexual monstrosity being wrested from their euphemistic control and exposed to the world for what it truly is.

This immediately raises the question of whether or not Lucy has any real power at all, since her sexual potency serves ultimately as the reason for her destruction. The best explanation is to regard Lucy's power as only partial authority: it is the power to disarm men of their illusion and reduce their control over their own selves, but it is not sufficient to protect her from their retaliation. This, of course, leads to the even more pressing question of why this retaliation is so fierce and sudden. After all, why should Lucy, as a challenger of male authority, be dealt with so much more expediently than Dracula? Once again, the answer lies in the fundamental nature of the patriarchy that Stoker presents. In short, it is a matter of the patriarchy's system of rules. Dracula's challenge to established authority may be presented as being both representative of male nature and an integral part of a male power structure that requires internal dissent as one of its building blocks. But unfortunately for Lucy, the laws of the patriarchy do not allow such male roles to be assumed by a woman. Even Lucy is aware of this early on in her rebellion. Defying her proclaimed, selfless belief in the need to tell a man everything, for instance, she knowingly commits a patriarchal sin when she asks Mina "not to say a word to any one, not even her mother, about her sleep-walking adventure" (102). From the start, Lucy's rise to power differs from Dracula's in that she must begin by breaking social laws, whereas Dracula's maleness allows him to rebel within these legal bounds. This pattern continues, with Lucy gradually casting aside all of the qualities which the patriarchy expects from its women, particularly those which apply to the woman as homemaker, wife, and mother. Thus do we find Lucy repeatedly attempting to escape from the domesticity of her mother's house by sleepwalking. Likewise, once free of her domestic jail, she is seen gasping and shuddering, wearing only a loose nightdress (101) and thereby demonstrating a degree of sexual hunger quite unbecoming of a patriarchally sanctioned woman. Nothing, however, casts Lucy into such direct confrontation with her expected role as does her "careless" and "callous" act of flinging a child to the ground and "growling over it as a dog growls over a bone" (217). As many critics have noted, this is not just an act of violence: Craft makes this clear when he observes that the scene creates an inverted image in which a child "is not being fed but is being fed upon" (181). With this obvious link made between Lucy and the women in Dracula's castle--who devour an infant when Dracula denies them Harker (48)--one can only agree with Alan P. Johnson, who writes that Lucy's symbolic act "is directed not only at the vows and legal constraints of the role she has been expected to assume but at motherhood itself" (27). While she is certainly empowered with a new degree of potency and volition, Lucy manages to achieve this brief moment of autonomous freedom only by openly rejecting even the most fundamental patriarchal expectations, thereby making an enemy of the entire male power structure.

This story of Lucy's illicit rise to power and her consequent destruction is far more than an isolated event. Indeed, Stoker presents it as a model with a very far-reaching scope. It is, in fact, the story of all women, as is made clear when Mina--the novel's only other major female character--undergoes a highly similar experience. Even more so than Lucy, Mina outwardly strives to perform her duty in the light of male expectations, trying to content and busy herself with "arranging things and housekeeping" for her husband (161). But just as Lucy breaks the rules by asking Mina to keep a secret between them, so does Mina transgress when she refers to her seemingly innocent "little plans" (63). Since the world of plans, plots, and counterplots is defined as a male affair in this novel, Mina is trespassing into the male sphere. With the same, small seed that begins Lucy's rebellion, Mina starts a revolt of her own. As is the case with Lucy, there is an element of sexual revolt in Mina's behavior, although it is easily overlooked. For example, as Mina watches over Lucy to prevent her from sleepwalking, she gives the misleading appearance of being Lucy's sexually-disapproving jailor. Similarly, when she finds her escaped somnambulant, Mina's first action is to cover the "unclad" Lucy modestly with a shawl (102). As the novel progresses, however, there are signs of Mina's increasingly sexual nature. Mina's kisses, for instance, are like Lucy's in that they are not restricted to a single man: comforting Arthur, she "impulsively . . . bent over and kissed him" (237). In isolation, such an act would seem to be little more than an offer of maternal kindness, but this is, after all, a novel in which simply the transfusion of blood brands Lucy a "polyandrist" (182); clearly, Mina's kiss can be seen in two very different lights. Later, when confronted for the first time by the overt sexuality of Dracula, Mina's rebellion becomes more obvious when she admits to having felt "a new fascination" (264). In fact, when she recalls being subjected to Dracula's vampiric penetration, Mina's only comment is "strangely enough, I did not want to hinder him" (293).

Mina's rebellion is not entirely patterned after Lucy's, however. While it does contain a sexual element, Mina's revolt is both more subtle and broader in scope, focusing as it does upon not only revolution, but also infiltration as Mina strives to become privy to the internal affairs of patriarchal politics. This marks a significant difference between Lucy and Mina, for Lucy wishes to attain only the autonomy of self-determination, seeking to distance herself from all patriarchal control. Mina, on the other hand, actually attempts to work her way up the patriarchal ladder. Unlike Lucy, Mina is driven by an intense curiosity and hunger for knowledge, devouring it in much the same manner that Renfield devours his pets, and herein lies the fuel of her efforts. There is virtually nothing, no detail whatsoever, that fails to attract her interest, as she herself maintains when she states:

> I shall try to do what I see lady journalists do: interviewing and writing descriptions and trying to remember conversations. I am told that, with a little practice, one can remember all that goes on or that one hears said during a day. (63)

It comes as no surprise, then, that we repeatedly find Mina devoutly studying any subject that presents itself to her, ranging from stenography to train schedules, and particularly the various journals, letters, and phonograph recordings with which the men around her have recorded the proceedings of their power struggles with Dracula and with each other. Of course, any acquisition of knowledge on the part of a woman represents a potential sin in the eyes of the patriarchy, for knowledge is clearly the most potent basis of male power in Dracula. This is made quite obvious by the hierarchical structure which we have previously identified. With the chain of command descending from Van Helsing to Seward to Harker and then to Holmwood and Morris and finally Renfield, it is plainly a pattern based upon education and intellectual ability. Moreover, an overt equation of knowledge with power is repeatedly demonstrated at each step in the battle against Dracula. Dracula, for instance, is initially empowered by the knowledge of England which he has laboriously acquired through study and the questioning of Harker, while his foes are ultimately able to turn the tide of battle as a result of all that they have learned about him. It is Harker, however, who best demonstrates the power that comes from knowledge when he discovers that Dracula is much more than an insane creation of his own imaginings: "I felt impotent, and in the dark, and distrustful. But, now that I know, I am not afraid, even of the Count" (193).

What we are thus left with once again is the case of a woman whose grasp exceeds the reach that has been defined for her. In this light, Van Helsing's comment that Mina possesses a "man's brain--a brain that a man should have were he much gifted" (241) is potentially misleading, for this statement is not just a compliment to Mina, but also a warning to his fellow males. Van Helsing's true feelings about Mina are expressed in his subsequent insistence that despite her "man's brain," the world of male affairs holds "no part for a woman" (241), an opinion which is seconded by Seward (262). What these men perceive, and obviously feel threatened by, is Mina's unusual potential to wield knowledge and the power derived from it as if she were a man. Such is the case when Harker gives her his journal along with his apparent permission for her to read it (114). The truth of the matter, however, is seen in Harker's request that she refrain from reading it and "share [his] ignorance" of its contents (114). To this, Mina readily agrees, closing the journal with a wax seal that she imprints with her wedding ring (115). In effect, the journal is made into a holy covenant, a dual symbol of trust and of the accepted limits of knowledge. When she finally succumbs to curiosity and breaks the seal (185), Mina reenacts the original sin as she bites into the forbidden fruit of knowledge. What she finds, in this record of the first meeting with Dracula, is nothing short of a detailed account of the cabbalistic secrets of the male political organization. That she has transgressed into a forbidden sphere is made even more apparent when, referring to the men, Mina observes, "They did not quite know what to say or do, as they were ignorant of the amount of my knowledge" (235). Ignorant of the exact amount they are, but these men clearly fear any knowledge in the hands of a woman, particularly a woman who demonstrates from the start an ability to use knowledge in a male fashion. Consider, for instance, Mina's act of giving Van Helsing the shorthand copy of Harker's journal. Of this event, Mina simply states, "I could not resist the temptation of mystifying him a bit--I suppose it is some of the taste of the original apple that remains still in our mouths" (189). Yet, Mina's act has profound political consequences: it demonstrates that she has access to a body of knowledge--and hence, a source of power--that is beyond the reach of the patriarchy's leader, who then is forced to ask for her help in translating the coded words. In this one brief moment, Mina challenges the entire concept of patriarchal rule.

Rebellion, challenge, and defiance--these are the qualities that Stoker infuses into his female characters at their most fundamental levels, qualities which they share with their male counterparts. Yet, living under a male-dominated system of rule, these are the very qualities which are strictly forbidden to these women. What we see, then, is that the central tension in the novel is not between Dracula and his male pursuers, but rather between male rulers and female subjects. Certainly, this is demonstrated in the cases of Lucy and Mina, but Stoker goes even further in presenting this issue when dealing with the three female vampires residing in Dracula's castle. While receiving only minor treatment in the novel, these three women are actually invested with remarkable significance: they are the symbols of all female rebellion and an indication of what Lucy, Mina, and all rebellious women must become if left unchecked by the forces of patriarchal authority. Like Lucy and Mina, for instance, they cast off the approved definition of femininity, choosing instead to embrace a sexual and aggressive existence of seducing males and consuming children. Furthermore, they continue the pattern of women politically gendering themselves male. While Lucy adopts a decidedly unfeminine sexual appetite and Mina usurps the male prerogatives of knowledge and mental acuity, the nameless female vampires go even further by embracing the male banner of physical violence. Certainly, when they gather around Harker in preparation to penetrate and consume him, they threaten to do to him exactly what the gang of men does to Lucy in her tomb: they threaten to make him the victim of sexual violence. Nor is this an idle threat; these women have enormous capacity, not just to gender themselves male and dominant, but also to gender a male passive and weak. Such is the case when Harker finds himself totally unable to resist their advances--instead, he can only bat his eyelashes as he languorously waits to be penetrated (46-7)--and when Van Helsing ruefully admits to a similar disarming fascination with these women: "I, Van Helsing, with all my purpose and with my motive for hate--I was moved to a yearning for delay which seemed to paralyse my faculties and to clog my very soul" (374). It is Harker's words, however, that best explain the full significance of the female vampires, when, trapped with both these women and Dracula in the castle, he maintains, "[N]othing can be more dreadful than those awful women, who were--who are--waiting to suck my blood" (49). Even Dracula does not seem so dire a threat to Harker, and with good reason: Dracula is an accepted part of the male order, and is even the catalyst behind Harker's own acts of bravery. The female vampires, on the other hand, are perceived as alien and other. Rather than being a fostering part of the patriarchy, they are women who have vastly exceeded the allowed limits to female power and who now represent an external force that threatens the very foundations of patriarchal rule. Not just powerful in their own right, they display an ability and an aptitude to disempower males, and even threaten to displace men altogether from positions of authority.

What Stoker's novel ultimately presents, then, is a battle of ideologies which is fought between two highly polarized gender groups: the male establishment and the female opposition. Surprisingly, however, the outcome of this conflict--which is certainly the very core of Dracula's theme--continues to remain a subject of debate among many critics. On the one hand, there are those who maintain that the novel is conservative and politically oppressive: to Judith

Weissman, Dracula presents "an extreme version of the stereotypically Victorian attitudes toward sexual roles" (69), while Griffin is struck by the "venomous misogyny" and "antifemale sentiment running the length of the novel" (144). Others stridently disagree, among them Johnson with his claim that Dracula "presents an incisive and sympathetic analysis of the frustration felt by women in late-nineteenth-century Britain" (21) and Stephanie Demetrakopoulos, who maintains that Stoker's work is an "attempt at feminism" (104) which "clearly accepts initiative in women as positive" (110). Despite the vigor of the debate, however, it is difficult to view the novel as anything less than repressive.

The most obvious clue to the novel's political orientation can be found in Dracula's accepting and essentially uncritical presentation of the violent brutality aimed at the female characters. What the novel presents is a double standard, in which male rebellion is sanctioned while female rebellion is utterly crushed. For instance, even though Harker flagrantly disobeys Dracula's order to sleep only in his designated room, this act of disobedience goes entirely unpunished. Indeed, Dracula's thoughts are so far from any notions of anger or punishment that his only response is to save Harker from the castle's female retinue. How different, though, is his response to the women who have disobeyed his edict to leave Harker alone, as seen when he rages, "How dare you touch him, any of you? How dare you cast eyes on him when I had forbidden it?" (47). Even Harker is astounded at the deep-seated violence behind Dracula's words, observing,

> His eyes were positively blazing. The red light in them was lurid, as if the flames of hell-fire blazed behind them. His face was deathly pale, and the lines of it were hard like drawn wires; the thick eyebrows that met over the nose now seemed like a heaving bar of white-hot metal. With a fierce sweep of his arm, he hurled the woman from him, and then motioned to the others, as though he were beating them back (47).

What Stoker shows us is that while Dracula is certainly consumed with a desire to usurp the status and power of other men, his true fury is reserved for the women who defy him. This is further demonstrated when he rages at Mina, telling her, "[Y]ou are to be punished for what you have done" (293). Nor is it Dracula alone who reacts with such singular violence to the female characters; even his sworn opponents share this quality with him. Van Helsing's band, for example, demonstrates no particular cruelty when finally given the opportunity to slay their foe. It is as if Dracula is treated as a worthy and challenging opponent, who at the very least deserves the heroic honor and respect of death by combat. Conversely, the females who are perceived to be foes of the established order are met with a degree of barbarous cruelty that even Van Helsing refers to as "butchery" (375). At its mildest, this pattern brutality takes the form of physical torture when Mina is burned with the Host--the symbol of ultimate patriarchal authority--"as though it had been a piece of white-hot metal" (302). And yet, this question of the incongruous treatment of male and female challengers is never directly addressed by the novel. Instead, we are simply given instances of even more extreme treatment in the cases of Lucy and the other female vampires, to which the terms "wild work" (374) and "butcher work" (375) hardly do justice. In truth, these women are subjected to an utterly horrid process of sexual torture and mutilation as they are staked and decapitated. The greatest shock to the reader, however, is that one fails to find any narrative disapproval of this treatment whatsoever. In fact, what one does discover is that the narrative actually grants moral sanction to these events. This can be seen in the final description of the brutalized women in the castle, who are said to be "placid each in her full sleep of death" (375). Similarly, Lucy returns her own sadistic destruction with a "holy calm that lay like a sunshine" (223) upon "her face of unequalled sweetness and purity" (222). Amazingly, the novel suggests that these women are given exactly the treatment that they both need and desire.

The novel's advocacy of the forces of patriarchy is further supported by the treatment of the only other female rebel: Mina. Unlike Lucy and the other female vampires, Mina survives the novel, but this in itself marks no real victory, for the price of this survival is the total recanting of all political challenges. On the surface of the novel, Mina's survival is attributed to Dracula's death. In truth, however, Mina is allowed to live only because she so desperately struggles to suppress the rebellion which lies within her. Whereas Lucy and the other three women revel in their sexual potency, for instance, Mina is perpetually shown battling the seeds of such power. Indeed, her wilful denial of all sexual impulse often borders on neurosis. This can be seen in her prudish belief that it is "very improper" (178) for a husband to hold his wife's arm in public, and again when, rescuing Lucy from her sleepwalking adventure, she covers her bare feet with mud so that no one may see this absurdly minor degree of undress (102). Of course, Mina's most vehement denial of her rebellious impulses occurs after her sexually suggestive contact with Dracula, when she utters a "scream so wild, so ear-piercing, so despairing" as to convince the men of her "endless grief" (288). As further proof of her repentance, Mina then goes on to uphold and endorse the stereotypical male attitudes toward a fallen woman. She claims to be sexually and ideologically polluted, for instance, when she cries, "Unclean, unclean! I must touch [Harker] or kiss him no more" (290). Likewise, she even goes so far as to suggest that death would be preferable to life as a vampire (296), a statement of which Van Helsing proudly approves and to which he eagerly replies by saying that he would be more than willing to perform "such an euthanasia" (297). Mina further distances herself from the forces of female rebellion when she attributes these forces to "some haunting presence" that needs to be "removed" from her as if it were entirely external (326). To her credit, Mina manages to convince the men that she is not truly responsible for her actions against them, leading Seward to speculate upon the nature of a "controlling force subduing or restraining her, or inciting her to action" (334). The most significant of Mina's recanting actions, however, occurs when she offers to become the hypnotized tool of Van Helsing and acts "in obedience to his will" (349), thereby embracing the patriarchal values which oppose her emancipation. Although teasing glimmers of freedom and autonomy dance just beyond her grasp, Mina finally refuses to flee her male-controlled world; this is what makes her a salvageable woman, and it is the decision to which she owes her continued existence.

Finally, there is the issue of Dracula's death, which further indicates the degree to which the novel validates the behavior of the male characters. Essentially, this revolves around the question of whether or not Dracula is actually killed at the novel's end. It is an issue that has been ignored almost entirely by the critics, and those who do examine it do so in much the same manner as Roth, who makes but a passing reference to Dracula's survival in a largely unexplored footnote (121). Yet, the question is ripe with possibilities. On the surface of the matter, we are shown a last confrontation in which Dracula is stabbed in the heart by Morris, cut through the throat by Harker, and promptly reduced to dust. An instant before this happens, though, Dracula flashes an unsettling look of "triumph" at his foes (380), and it is conceivable that this is a sign of his survival. Certainly, although the conclusion of the novel makes no outward suggestion that Dracula remains alive, the body of the novel provides much evidence of such an outcome. Consider, for instance, the exact details surrounding the final deaths of Lucy and the other female vampires. In the case of each woman, there is a formal set of rules that must be followed to effect a lasting death: namely, the penetration of the vampire's heart with a wooden stake and the subsequent complete decapitation of the body. These requirements are fulfilled exactly when Lucy and the women in Dracula's castle are destroyed. Of course, the same rules apply to Dracula, who also cannot be destroyed by ordinary means. Indeed, Van Helsing claims that the only means of permanently destroying Dracula is either to "cut off his head and burn his heart or drive a stake through it" (209) or to kill him with "a sacred bullet fired into the coffin" (246). The other men echo Van Helsing's words, with Harker stating, "If the Count is there, Van Helsing and Seward will cut off his head at once and drive a stake through his heart . . . . if we can so treat the Count's body, it will soon after fall into dust" (339). Similarly, Seward proclaims, "[We] shall not rest until the Count's head and his body have been separated, and we are sure that he cannot reincarnate" (358). In light of such detailed requirements, one can only wonder at the outcome of the novel's final battle. There is every indication throughout the novel that Dracula cannot be destroyed in normal combat, yet this is exactly what seems to occur. Stabbed with a pair of knives--not a wooden stake or a "sacred bullet"--Dracula is made only to suffer a symbolic enactment of his death. After all, his heart is neither staked nor burned and his neck is merely cut rather than severed. Does he truly die? Stoker seems to suggest so as the twin knife strokes result in Dracula's dissolution "into dust" (380). Yet, Van Helsing has previously noted that Dracula can take the form of "elemental dust" (245). There is no easily discernable answer here and this is certainly the novel's most problematic event. The question itself, however, is sufficient evidence to support the contention that the narrative makes a partisan display in favor of the forces of patriarchy. Regardless of whether or not Dracula is truly destroyed at the novel's end, it is obvious that he receives a much more lenient punishment for his rebellion than the women. Whereas they are grotesquely tortured and mutilated, Dracula is allowed a much more dignified end: his is the quick and respectful death of honorable combat, while theirs are the deaths of shameful depravity. A relentless foe who boldly fights to the very end, Dracula earns an element of admiration from his male opponents. How telling, then, is the unspoken fact that three of the four female vampires are not even awarded the dignity of a name.

As the novel comes to its close, what we are left with is the re-establishment of the status quo of patriarchal rule. Dracula may or may not be defeated, but the real victory is saved until the final page, with its description of the motherly Mina surrounded by her ideological jailors. Moreover, after so long being an integral part of the writing, reading, and translation of written words, Mina is entirely displaced from all narrative control as Harker's journal provides the closing words. Made into a mother--without any troubling mention of sexuality--deprived of a voice and placed under guard, she is put on display as the ideal notion of femininity. And, yet, she is alone, a single salvageable female among the many who must be destroyed. In the end, the novel's attitude towards women is best summarized by the wolf handler, Builder, who steadfastly maintains, "[Y]ou can't trust wolves no more nor women" (145).

Dracula is, however, neither unique nor original in its suggestion that women hold within them the seeds of a latent--and dangerous--rebellion against the male establishment, a theme which had already become an established convention in vampire fiction. In fact, more than four decades prior to the publication of Stoker's novel, the reading public had been exposed to a virtually identical message in C. W. Webber's Spiritual Vampirism: The History of Etherial Softdown and Her Friends of the "New Light" (1853). Even more so than Stoker's, Webber's novel polarizes gender politics into opposing male and female camps, with virtually no common ground between them. And while Webber's female vampire remains alive and undefeated at the novel's end, the narrative's ideological stance is a statement of conservatism and misogyny that rivals--and ultimately exceeds--even Dracula's repressive theme.

As simply a vampire novel, Spiritual Vampirism confronts the reader with a certain degree of novelty, presenting vampirism in the pseudo-scientific guise of the spiritual and intellectual draining of the victim through the vampire's manipulation of "the nervous or Odic fluid" (6). This, at least, is the explanation presented in the novel's lengthy introduction, which goes on to explain much of human history in terms of this purported discovery, but not before making clear that the "negative" Odic pole (the quality upon which the vampiric draining is based) is most often found "in women" (13). The subsequent body of the novel immediately homes in on this observation and what we are given is the account of one such spiritual female vampire, Etherial Softdown.[1]

Like Stoker's women, Etherial is shown to be a female rebel opposed to the established social order. Moreover, her objective is not just personal freedom, but also the transferral of traditional political power to herself. It is this "furious, raging, craving lust" (26) for power, for instance, that results in her attempt to manipulate and control a New York newspaper editor so as "to command an 'organ'" (205) of the social media. Similarly, she utterly rejects traditional female roles, a proclivity best illustrated when she curses, throws, and kicks her own child in a fit of rage (135-7), thus embracing the same anti-maternal values that are characteristic of Stoker's female vampires. She even demonstrates the same pattern of surreptitious infiltration into the world of male secrets that we have previously seen in Mina's behavior. This occurs when her powers of mental transference allow her to discover her unnamed doctor's most closely guarded secret, the scandalous and negligent behavior that resulted in the unnecessary loss of a patient's life (44). So, too, in the case of Manton--the spiritual, intellectual, and financial victim of Etherial's depredations throughout most of the novel--does she manage to divine his secret and deep-seated grief over his mother's death (118). In both of these cases, the discovered information is used by Etherial to initiate the mental decline of her male victim and, once again, we find the pattern of a rebellious female who strives to disempower the ruling class of males. Furthermore, Etherial completes the pattern by simultaneously advancing her own position while the men decline, as seen in her subsequent success in acquiring their money (76, 178). It is consequently made quite clear that despite the novel's introduction, which gives the impression of presenting spiritual vampirism in the gender-neutral terms of a far-reaching historical and political force, the truth of the matter is that the novel finally treats the phenomenon as a specifically gender-based issue. Etherial herself makes this particularly clear by choosing only men as her victims, upon whom she boasts that she shall have "a woman's vengeance" (118).

A further similarity between Webber's novel and Dracula can be found in the male attitudes toward woman. Like Stoker's work, Spiritual Vampirism presents the conventional male value system of extremes in which women are either adored as angels or denounced as demons. This is made plain in the case of virtually every male who comes into contact with Etherial. For example, Boanerges Phospher, the novel's would-be philosopher and accomplished opportunist, blindly insists that Etherial is a "chaste spirit" and refers to her as "Heaven-bride" and "Angel" (35), while the doctor who attends Etherial can see her only as "an earth-visiting angel" full of "spotless purity" (42). It is left to Manton, however, to voice fully the paradigm of these patriarchal values. On the one hand, we are told that "Manton always idealised woman" (121), and it comes as little surprise when we find him insisting that the womanly ideal is to become an "angel" (91). On the other hand, Manton is quick to mention his utter contempt for any woman who fails to live up to his impossible standard. "Your manly-minded women are both my disgust and abhorrence" (92), he proclaims, going on to maintain that "the moment she unsexes herself" with the "loftier processes of intellection," "she and her thoughts become vulgarised" (92). Once again, we are shown an ideological system that stubbornly refuses to allow women any existence other than the one which is imposed upon them. Moreover, as is the case in Stoker's novel, Spiritual Vampirism also demonstrates the wild violence with which female rebellion is met, as is made apparent by the mob of men which descends upon Graham House, a building which serves as a political haven for those who have been marginalized by the patriarchy as a result of sex, race, or religion. Yelling forth their battle cry of "Down with the amalgamation den!" (47), they attack the door of the house with an axe and send forth a plethora of threats against the white lovers of black men, thus clearly demonstrating their intolerance of sexually--and hence, politically--self-determining women. Likewise, they also demonstrate the curious acceptance of male challengers that is to be found in Dracula: there is no threat whatsoever directed at the supposed black male lovers.

If there is any real difference in the ideological messages of these two novels, it can only be found in the stances taken by their respective narrators. While Stoker's narrative implicitly condones the punishment of the rebellious female through its failure to object to such treatment of women, Webber's narrator--at least, the primary narrator, through whom the bulk of the novel is related--displays an even greater degree of support for the established patriarchal order. If Stoker's narrator is guilty by his silence, Webber's is even more blatantly guilty due to his overt and extremely vocal advocacy of the repressive regime. For instance, there is the matter of the narrator's complete undercutting of the political movement for women's rights. At first, Etherial is presented in terms of a symbol of female suffering, being subjected to the tyranny of a brutal husband who steals her child and her money while denying her recourse to a divorce (32). Indeed, it is as if Etherial's life is patterned after that of a Wollstonecraft heroine, an observation which is further supported when Etherial uses the alias Marie in her dealings with men (Wollstonecraft repeatedly having given her heroines variations on this name). The narrator, however, displays absolutely no concern over such injustice and simply claims that Etherial's account of her suffering is "most skilfully and artistically worked up" (110). Similarly, when Etherial attends a political meeting advocating the rights of women, the narrator derides her as the "presiding Pythoness" (80) even as she embarks upon an impassioned speech in which she identifies very real social injustice, as seen when she maintains, "Woman is oppressed by man. She is denied her just rights. She is taxed, yet denied the privileges of representation. She is a slave, without the privileges of slavery!" (81). And, yet, with an utter disregard of social justice, Webber's narrator manages to slander the entire women's movement, as represented in the novel, by attacking its leader, Etherial. In a similar manner, the narrator also sanctions the conservative male mob that attacks the Graham House and the self-determining female sexuality that it represents: callously heedless of the wild destruction that results as the building is "gutted" and "shattered" and the occupants are "roughly hurled into the street" (52), the narrator simply states, "It will be seen in yet other words and years how much there was of real danger to the well-being of society, in the doctrines taught and practised within its unhallowed walls" (53).

Of course, the most telling factor in the narrative's advocacy of the patriarchal order is one which it shares completely with Dracula: a double standard under which male political challenge is condoned while equivalent actions on the part of women are met with harsh, reactionary treatment. Boanerges Phospher, for example, is no less a charlatan than Etherial in his "self-instituted," "self-ordained," and "self-asserted" (55) title of "Professor of Elocution" (54), his shameless piracy of philosophers he has never even read, and his greed-ridden efforts to turn it all to his personal profit. Being a male, however, Phospher is entirely exempted from all reproach. He "intends . . . no harm" (54), the narrator assures us, and is even presented as a comic example of "the brazen heroism of impudence" (54). Quite unlike Etherial and her political sisters, Phospher is even awarded a modicum of admiration when the narrator maintains that "his versatility at least commands respect" (231). In exactly the same light, there is the matter of Regulus, the leader of the secret, all-male cabal that is revealed in the novel's closing pages. With the cabal's goal being nothing short of the total control and domination of all aspects of American society, we are shown a political and ideological challenge far in excess of anything attempted by Etherial, or even by the entire women's movement. Yet, despite his greater challenge, Regulus is ultimately regarded as the lesser threat, and as such is awarded a "concession of respect" (235). If there is a moral here, it is the same one found in Stoker's novel and it is best expressed by Manton when he says of people in general, "I . . . wish . . . to command them at my will" (92). Within these two novels, at least, this is an acceptable, and even inevitable, statement from a member of the patriarchy that controls society. When issued by a woman, however, such a proclamation is repeatedly regarded as heresy.

Together, Dracula and Spiritual Vampirism serve as clear demonstrations of the conservative male politics that form the heart of early vampire fiction. It is an ideology rooted as much in the fear of women as it is in the cruel repression of them. However, vampire novels and stories were not begun in a vacuum, and it was not long before the changing social vision of the day began to reshape not only political reality, but also, as we will see in the next chapter, the continued literary presentation of the female vampire.

Notes

1 In many ways, Webber's novel can be considered one of the first instances in which psychic vampirism defines the nature of the female vampire, thus beginning a trend that is later continued by many writers, male and female alike. It is somehow appropriate, though, that this should be the case. With the female vampire almost always engaged in an ideological--rather than simply physical--battle against the male order, it is fitting that the conflict should be fought in the arena of mental and spiritual powers.

Chapter II: A Cry in the Night

> She did not know why she came in
> or how she was to be got out.
>
> -- Marie Corelli,
> The Young Diana

Even as many as twenty-four years prior to the publication of Dracula, vampire fiction began to undergo a pronounced shift in its ideological message. With the appearance of J. Sheridan Le Fanu's "Carmilla" (1872), female vampires come to represent much more than the destabilizing threat to a male-controlled society that is described in Dracula and Spiritual Vampirism; instead, such creatures become the loci of an increasingly thoughtful consideration of the moral and ideological nature of the politically empowered woman. Le Fanu's story, along with Marie Corelli's The Young Diana (1918), begins by taking its narrative perspective as that of a potentially rebellious woman, thereby breaking the impenetrable shell with which Stoker, Webber, and other such writers surround the female vampire by limiting--or even denying altogether--her subjective position.[1] This, in turn, allows the writer to explore the needs and ambitions of these women in an altogether new, and largely sympathetic, light.

This alternative focus is immediately apparent in "Carmilla," which is told through the eyes of a young girl, Laura. It is crucial to realize that despite her compelling vivaciousness and sympathetic kindness, Laura is, at heart, a staunch opponent of the patriarchal order. There have been critical misconceptions surrounding this point: in her article "Women and Power in 'Carmilla,'" Carol Senf claims that, by tradition, "women are often victims [as] is easily seen in Laura, the naive young narrator" (27). Senf's argument holds merit only in so far as it maintains that Laura is a symbolic representative. She is far, however, from being a symbol of feminine helplessness. From the start, Le Fanu presents Laura as a woman with a deep-seated impulse to acquire the political power from which her sex is traditionally excluded; as Laura observes, she is "studiously kept in ignorance" (363). Like Mina, though, she identifies this power with the knowledge that is kept beyond her grasp and she is driven by an incessant desire to learn. When she hears the cryptic and secretive words of the General's letter, she begins "speculating" as to their meaning (370). Likewise, she is "inquisitive" (380) and "unspeakably curious" (376) about the mysterious conversation that passes between her father and Carmilla's mother, and "burning with curiosity" as she ponders the whispered words between her father and the doctor who examines her (427). There is more here than just a precursory, foreshadowing relationship to Mina. Laura is made the symbol of a widespread, feminine hunger for knowledge: "Curiosity," she tells us, "is a restless and unscrupulous passion, and no one girl can endure, with patience, that hers should be baffled" (388).

What follows, then, is Laura's inclusion in the pattern of female rebellion we have already observed in Dracula and Spiritual Vampirism. Like Mina, Lucy, and Etherial, Laura demonstrates both a fundamental rejection of patriarchal values as they apply to women, and an embracement of those values as they apply to men. Her rejection of the subservient role of women is seen in her critical defiance of male authority, beginning with the male doctor who forces Laura to take "medicine, which of course [she] hated" (364). Likewise, she challenges the wisdom and infallibility of the male order when she refuses to accept her father's assurance that her childhood contact with Carmilla is merely a dream (365). Yet, as with the other female characters we have considered, Laura shows unmistakable signs of patterning her own quest for power after the male model. There is implicit support of a hierarchical power structure, for instance, when, informing the reader of the number of people in her household, she adds, "I don't include servants or those dependents who occupy rooms in the buildings attached to the schloss" (361). Just how closely Laura mirrors men in her expression of power is seen from her earliest childhood when, "vexed and insulted" by the absence of her nurse (363), she prepares to throw a tantrum, thus demonstrating her desire to command and control those whom she perceives as lesser creatures.[2]

It is Carmilla, though, who exemplifies the end result of

Laura's impulse towards rebellion and the garnering of female power. Even more so than her hostess, Carmilla is openly defiant of the male-controlled society in which she lives, particularly the patriarchal religion which rules it. As Laura observes, Carmilla refuses to pray (410), and when Laura's father attributes the mysterious illness of the local residents to God's will, Carmilla scoffingly refutes him, maintaining that nature is the only power that matters and is a force that even a patriarchal God must obey (398).[3] Like Laura, however, Carmilla simultaneously advocates a hierarchical social structure when it is to her benefit, succinctly summarizing her political beliefs when she tells Laura, "I don't trouble my head about peasants" (393). Once again, what we find is a woman who, seeking male power, becomes male in nature. For instance, when she takes offence at the panhandling hunchback, Carmilla threatens him with torture and death, vigorously embracing the violence of patriarchal power when she proclaims, "My father would have had the wretch tied up to the pump, and flogged with a cart-whip, and burnt to the bones with the castle brand!" (397).

Carmilla's male values are further demonstrated by her sexuality. Many critics fail to make this observation, focusing instead upon what they perceive to be the lesbian relationship between Carmilla and Laura: Leslie Shepard is one example, insisting that "Carmilla" is a story about the "curiously modern theme of Lesbian love" (10), a view which

James Twitchell supports: it "is the story of a lesbian entanglement, a story of the sterile love of homosexuality expressed through the analogy of vampirism" (129). What makes such criticism ultimately disappointing is its total failure to address Carmilla's sexual and ideological maleness. Her relationships with women--ranging from Laura and the General's daughter to two unnamed peasant girls (392, 398)--are primarily that of a victimizer. In particular, Carmilla becomes a decidedly male victimizer in that her vampiric act of biting female necks associates her with penetration and deflowering pain. Moreover, Carmilla's forceful draining of her prey casts her in the role of a violator, as is made clear when she bypasses the lock on Laura's door in her efforts to reach her sleeping victim (410). In short, Carmilla's sexual power is expressed as if she were nothing other than a male, and a particularly threatening one at that. This is entirely fitting in light of the political relationship Carmilla establishes with the women around her: borrowing from the patriarchy its notion of hierarchical command, Carmilla uses her vampiric power to establish an equivalent, mirroring system of matriarchy in which she is able to control and dominate the lesser females who come to be her victims. In effect, this is merely the male order renamed, for while Carmilla is able to attain a position of substantial power, she behaves like any other domineering patriarch. Even in her most intimate moments with Laura, Carmilla's fundamental maleness prevails, for she is consumed by her need to command. Whereas Laura is perpetually asking for Carmilla's permission and opinions, for instance, Carmilla is the one who takes an authoritative tone when she chastizes Laura for joining in the funeral hymn and curtly commands, "Come home" (393). Similarly, even as she professes her love for Laura, Carmilla presents herself in a manner highly suggestive of a male suitor trying to force an admission of love from a submissive and helpless woman. With "gloating eyes" (391), she proclaims her "right" to Laura's love (384). It is, of course, a right based upon the male example of possessive--and destructive--obsession: Carmilla makes this point quite clearly when she tells Laura, "You are mine" (391). In the end, it is only Carmilla's extreme ego that matters: Laura may choose to love or hate her, she explains, but that in no way changes the fact that Carmilla will possess her (409).

It is little wonder, though, that both Laura and Carmilla should resent the limited and essentially powerless position of women under patriarchal rule, or that both should demonstrate an attraction to the substance and form of male power. Just as much as the other works of vampire fiction we have considered, Le Fanu's story describes a society in which virtually all social power is held firmly in male hands: among the cast of males, we find a landowner (Laura's father), a general, two priests, three doctors, and a Baron. It is also essential to realize that these empowered men lead a highly reserved and isolationist lifestyle, choosing to exist in a remote region in which it is many miles between households and between the men who rule them. These men are almost entirely devoid of gregarious, sympathetic human feelings. The general, for example, "had been so long out of the great world" that a simple act of gossiping conversation with Carmilla's mother strikes him as something of a novelty (447). An even more extreme example is found in Laura's father, who is so exceedingly emotionless as to forget to tell Laura that the general's niece has died (368) and to watch in "silence" as the carriage carrying Carmilla and her mother races towards potential destruction amid the sympathetic and alarmed cries of the surrounding women (373). In fact, much like the men in Dracula, Le Fanu's male characters allow themselves to be bound in connecting relationships only when they perceive a threat to their power or their possessions. This can be seen when Laura's father consults with male doctors following Carmilla's nocturnal visits to his daughter (363, 411), and when the general does precisely the same thing when his niece suffers an identical fate (456). Likewise, when the two men join forces in the latter part of the story, it is only to establish a temporary bond of alliance in the battle against Carmilla.

Under such a system of unfeeling and jealously guarded male rule, it is hardly surprising that women are relegated to the status of male possessions. The general and Laura's father, for instance, oppose Carmilla primarily because of the threat she presents by taking away their prized females.[4] This notion of women being valued objects is further demonstrated by the constant references to feminine beauty in the story, which is the only quality the male authority figures wish women to have. Certainly, there is no question of allowing a woman to have an independent position of power. In all things, men strive to intervene for women: a male doctor must be consulted when a woman is ill and a priest must be called to pray for her (365). Furthermore, there is a repeated and deliberate effort to distance women from all significant sources of knowledge and information. Laura's father serves as an illustration of this point when he calls for a doctor to examine his daughter "without telling [her] a word about it" (426), and later when he confers with the doctor in a low tone meant to hide his words from female ears (427). As Laura observes, "[t]here was plainly something on his mind which he did not choose to divulge" (431), at least not to a woman.

Thus far, there would seem to be little to distinguish this story from the template provided by Webber and Stoker in their presentation of a male-controlled society in which females are denied any access to political power. Indeed, even the critics can fail to see anything more, as is the case with Gregory Waller, who argues that, like Mina, Laura survives her contact with a vampire because:

> [T]he old men of this rural world--doctor, father, General, scholar, Baron, priest--destroy the . . . female creature who has threatened their young women; through their alliance of social, religious, and scientific authority, these men reaffirm the power and the validity of a patriarchal ruling class that can only see female sexuality as an aberration. (53)[5]

Others, like Carol Senf, disagree: Waller is incorrect, Senf maintains, because "Le Fanu reveals that the men in the story who attempt to change their world through violence are . . . ineffectual" (31). There is much evidence to support Senf's position. The novel's closing words, for instance, tell of Laura's continuing obsession with Carmilla--whom she imagines she sees and hears--and thus imply defeat for the male efforts to remove Laura from Carmilla's influence. Furthermore, if Laura's impression is accurate, Carmilla may even have survived her supposed destruction at the hands of the males who despoil her tomb. Yet another possible defeat for the men lies in the prologue to the story, with its mention of Laura's death, and the consequent suggestion that Laura may have passed on to a vampiric existence of her own. Regardless of their ultimate truth, however, the persistent implications of these questions are sufficient to demonstrate the failure of the patriarchy, which is unable either to eradicate the threat posed by Carmilla or to protect the women it claims for its own.

With this surprising defeat of the male power structure, Le Fanu sets the stage for his story's unprecedented contribution to vampire fiction. In his hands, such fiction ceases to be a simplistic and conservative reaction to female demands for greater social power. As Senf explains, because "Carmilla"

> reveals that there are many methods of acquiring power, some of them both more legitimate and more humane than others and shows that women can be victimizers as well as victims, it serves as a healthy alternative view to an occasionally simplistic . . . approach to [women's] history. (Senf 31)

In essence, Le Fanu entirely rewrites the focus of the vampire story, making it a forum to discuss the nature of a growing female power that can no longer be overwhelmed and suppressed by the patriarchal system. However, despite its success in redirecting the vampire theme to a new topic of investigation--this being the nature and legitimacy of female power--Le Fanu's story offers no easy answers in its consideration of the issue.

Le Fanu begins his study of the empowered woman by pointing to the distinction between males and females living under patriarchal rule. Whereas the story's male characters demonstrate a strong tendency towards isolated autonomy, the impulse of the women is in a very different direction. This is suggested when Laura describes her rural environment as "a lonely place" (361) filled with an oppressive sense of "solitude" (381). This feminine aversion to isolation is further revealed by the female relationships in Laura's household: always, there is a profound sense of social community among women as they gather into groups to share their knowledge and opinions. Such is obviously the case when Laura, Mademoiselle De Lafontaine, and Madame Perrodon gather together to discuss Carmilla (379), or simply to gossip over a game of cards (407). Still more revealing is Laura's act of telling these two other women--rather than her father--about her nocturnal visitation from Carmilla (413). Time and again, in the midst of a remote wilderness, Le Fanu's female characters are driven by their need to exist collectively, quite unlike the men who insist upon living separately from each other. Indeed, even the male community itself is aware--to some degree, at least--of this essential feature of feminine identity: prescribing the cure for Laura's apparent malady, a male doctor orders that Laura is not to "be alone for one moment" (429), but should rather be in the constant company of one of her female companions.

It is this communal need on the part of women that forms the crux of the story's consideration of the politically empowered female, which is centered largely around Laura's increasingly negative response to the ideology upon which

Carmilla's power is based. Although certainly attracted to this woman with whom she shares a desire for emancipation and self-determination, Laura reveals in her feelings toward Carmilla "something of repulsion" (384), a mixture of "adoration" and "abhorrence" (390). Essentially, Laura's attraction to her vampiric friend is an admiring response to a woman who has successfully risen above the social and political restraints imposed upon her sex. Laura finally rejects Carmilla's example, however, because of its betrayal of feminine values to those of patriarchy. For instance, Laura is greatly distressed by the "mysterious moods" with which Carmilla hides all information of her own history (390), for such a secretive and possessive husbanding of knowledge is one of the defining characteristics of male rule. Similarly, Laura describes Carmilla's embrace as "overpowering" and thus "hateful" (391): again, the objection is to Carmilla's male-like activity, which in this case consists of the attempt to dominate and command others. It is in the final meeting of the two women, though, that Laura's rejection of Carmilla is made momentarily complete: observing in Carmilla's behavior a "brutalised change" and "an instantaneous and horrible transformation" (460), Laura reacts with total aversion to this monstrous example of cruelty, selfishness, and violence.

This uniquely female criticism of the female vampire is further developed by Carmilla's own demonstration of reservation and unease with her empowered position. This can largely be attributed to Carmilla's own female nature which, like Laura's, is entrenched in a need for communal and supportive existence. Le Fanu makes this apparent throughout the story, which is the twice-told tale of Carmilla being abandoned by her commanding, affectionless mother and left in the care of strangers.[6] In the face of such rejection, Carmilla's immediate response is to seek love from a substitute female figure: thus we are told that she "lost her heart" to the general's niece (440). When she later finds herself living with Laura, Carmilla demonstrates this tendency when she tells her hostess that she wants "to be friends" and to share "intimacy" (384), and again when she displays "rapture" at Laura's decision to hang Carmilla's portrait in her bedroom (403). Indeed, rather than bestowing her violating vampiric bite, Carmilla first contacts Laura physically with a "caress" that "delightfully soothe[s]" (363).

Yet, for all Carmilla's inclination towards female community, she is torn by her conflicting desire to control and command women. This is seen most clearly in the rationalizing euphemisms with which she surrounds her vampiric nature, particularly with respect to the manner in which she equates vampiric draining with an act of "love" (389). With her stiff insistence that her predatory violence actually allows women to "die as lovers . . . die" and to "lie together" with her (399), Carmilla exposes her own disturbed conscience, for she cannot openly admit the truth behind her undead life. The result is a quagmire of confusion, with Carmilla professing endless love for Laura one moment, then suddenly becoming "apathetic" (405) and maintaining that love is merely "selfish" (409). In the end, Carmilla is left without an answer; her own words fail to satisfy her troubled mind and, looking back at her own forced transformation into a vampire, all she can say is that it was the result of "a cruel love--strange love, that would have taken [her] life" (409-10). All she knows is that after her exposure to this "strange love"--a decidedly male, possessive, and controlling love--she "was never the same" (409).

Surprisingly, it is with this very point that Le Fanu concludes his contemplation of the modes and forms of female power, for while even Carmilla expresses moral reservations towards women mirroring male behavior in their expression of authority, the story presents no viable alternative, as if to say that any female quest for political power must necessarily end at Carmilla's position. Le Fanu reinforces this conclusion by showing that, despite her myriad objections to Carmilla's example, Laura proceeds down exactly the same path and to precisely the same destination. Her open-hearted sympathy, for instance, is replaced with a self-serving cunning when she incorporates the concepts of "attack" and "tactics" into her dealings with Carmilla (389). Similarly, when she keeps her constitutional deterioration "very nearly to [her]self" (418), she becomes guilty of the same secretive behavior she has previously criticized. She even casts aside her earlier, considerate habit of always asking for permission before intruding upon someone, choosing instead to adopt Carmilla's mode of commanding, forceful entrance when she orders her servants "to force the door" to Carmilla's room (420). In short, Laura shows every sign of becoming another Carmilla, for once bitten, she becomes "a changed girl" (416). Like Carmilla, she resists these changes in herself, saying that they "discoloured and perverted the whole state of [her] life" (417), but her efforts are to no avail. As far as this story is concerned, Carmilla and Laura represent the inevitable fate of the politically advancing female, who is necessarily doomed either to remain powerless or to become an oppressor. There is no alternative here: as Laura aptly observes, "[P]eople are infectious, and persons of a like temperament are pretty sure, after a time, to imitate them" (410).

Le Fanu's story is not alone, however, in its bleak vision of a fore-ordained outcome to any act of political aggrandizement on the part of women: forty five years later, Marie Corelli's novel, The Young Diana (1918) was to reveal the problem as still unsolved. In fact, Corelli's position is that this political dilemma is of even greater severity than Le Fanu realized, for while "Carmilla" shows that the politically empowered female is doomed to cease existing as a woman, The Young Diana goes a step further in its claim that such females must cease to exist as a human beings.

Following in the tradition of psychic vampirism as established by Webber and others, Corelli adapts the motif to a highly sympathetic treatment of women, and the novel begins with the presentation of its heroine's positive--and eminently human--qualities. An English spinster of more than forty years, Diana is a housekeeper to her parents, casting all of her energy into making "things ready and comfortable" for them (16), which, to her credit, is a job she does "to perfection" (19). There is more than filial piety at work here, for Diana, with her constant "cheerfulness" (14) and "affectionate nature" (33), is filled with the joy of life. She is distinctly feminine, though, after the fashion of Le Fanu's characters: walking along a beach, she looks at the soaring sea gulls and "longed to be one with them, sharing their life, and imparting to others something of their joy" (23). It is this desire for human community that provides Diana's only real need, for love "is the one thing in all the world she craved" (22).

Love is, however, the one thing Diana is denied. In her turn, Diana comes to feel the oppressive weight of living under patriarchal rule, for she is marginalized by society on the grounds of her age and spinsterhood, both of which are qualities that devalue her in male eyes. This process begins when Captain Cleeve, Diana's fiance of seven years, abruptly terminates their engagement because Diana is no longer young and attractive. What follows is Diana's systematic rejection by the males around her: even her father is ashamed to be seen in public with this "old maid" (15). "No man wanted her," the narrator tells us, "not even to serve . . . as a pack-mule" (13). Just how deeply Diana is reviled is made doubly clear when an unnamed male bar patron claims that "it's really unpardonable for a woman to get out of her twenties and remain unmarried," to which one of his listeners responds by saying that the only course of action left to her parents is to "[s]mother her" (45). All of this is the result of male reaction to Diana's age, without the least consideration being made of her many accomplishments. She is, after all, an accomplished pianist, a master of six languages, and a devoted reader of all things scientific. This only results in her further marginalization, however: as her father tells us, "Any assumption of knowledge in a woman is quite enough to keep her out of society" (54), an opinion which is later echoed by the male scholar, Farnese, who steadfastly maintains, "Women are not supposed to understand the sciences" (152).

The most striking aspect of this chauvinistic code is, once again, the incredible double standard upon which it is based. When Cleeve abandons Diana, for instance, he justifies his actions with the thought of Diana's physical age, remaining entirely oblivious to the fact that he, too, has grown older. Likewise, Diana's father chastizes her for wearing white clothing, claiming, "Only very young people should wear white" (39). Yet, throughout the novel, this man, who is at least twenty years Diana's senior, repeatedly dresses himself in this same color. The male ego, Corelli shows us, despite its vehement rejection of aging women, incongruously insists upon eternally viewing itself as "a kind of youth, fit for dancing, tennis and other such gamesome occupations" (17).

In light of this impossible situation, it comes as little surprise when Diana decides to rebel against this imprisoning value system. The catalyst of this decision is provided by Diana's unintentional eavesdropping upon her parents, which leaves her totally aware of the depth of her father's resentment towards her age and lack of a husband (54). At first, she responds with despair, wondering "why she was ever born" (58). Upon further reflection, though, Diana is led to her own desperate need for self-worth and, "accustomed to think only of others, [she] now thought closely and consistently of herself" (56). It is this justifiably selfish impulse that promises to save Corelli's heroine, and it leads her to escape her life of drudgery by staging her own death--scattering her bathing clothes along the seashore so as to create the impression that she has drowned--and setting out into the world-at-large.

Ironically, what Diana finds as she escapes to Switzerland is nothing less than the very heart of the patriarchal system. Finally free of her past life, she finds employment with Dr. Feodor Dimitrius, who uses her as a subject in his grand experiment to control the forces of nature and create eternal life. Essentially, Dimitrius's theory is that life can be extended indefinitely by ingesting light that has been distilled into a liquid concentration. Once again, we find the story of a male striving to attain ultimate authority. In Dimitrius's case, this is seen when he maintains that life is the product of light and that light is the creation of God, whose "Active Personality" is expressed through light (133). Hence, Dimitrius's experiment can only be seen as an epic demonstration of hubris as he attempts to usurp and control the power of God himself. Furthermore, Diana is once more made the victim of patriarchal values, for Dimitrius chooses her as a subject because of her "mature years" which make her "of no particular use to anybody" and "easily . . . replaced" (186-7).

This time, however, Diana is not to be defeated. From the same impulse that allowed her to flee her home, an open defiance of the patriarchal system now grows. She criticizes Dimitrius, for instance, when she says, "I think you simply a man without any feeling except for yourself and your own aims. There are thousands,--aye, millions of your sex like you,--you are not extraordinary" (234). The whole system of male rule becomes her chosen enemy, and she issues what amounts to a declaration of war: "The mistake [women] make is when we fail to treat [Man] as he treats us! He is a creature who from very babyhood upwards should be whipped rather than spoilt" (82).

It is at this significant turning point that Diana enters a vampiric existence, one which Margaret Carter describes as that of an "[e]nergy draining predator, otherwise known as a psychic sponge" (Carter 46). Ostensibly, this occurs as the result of Dimitrius's experiment, which finally transforms Diana into a new form of immortal life. The truly significant change, however, occurs when she simultaneously acquires a vampiric ability to drain from her victims all sense of self-worth and illusions of grandeur. When she returns to England, for instance, her now youthful appearance comes as a profound shock to the men who once denigrated her. Like her father, who is reduced to "a chaotic condition of mind" (343) and her one-time lover whose "head swam round and round" (346), men repeatedly demonstrate their inability to withstand Diana's attack on their egos as she forces them to admit to themselves that, unlike her, they "have not grown younger" (359). This simple admission has enormous implications, of course, for it turns men into the very victims of the "paralysing weakness and tiredness" of aging that they, in turn, wish women to be (364). Moreover, this new-found source of power allows Diana to become free at last from male domination: even the massive ego of Dimitrius crumbles before Diana's onslaught as he calls himself her "slave" (304), fully realizing that "his beautiful 'experiment' has outmastered him, and that in the mysterious force wherewith his science has endowed her, she has gone beyond his power" (380).

There is, however, a price that accompanies Diana's freedom, and it is the same one paid by Laura and Carmilla: an ideological self-betrayal as the feminine impulse towards sympathy and community is replaced by a masculine lust for domination. From the start of her rebellion, Diana makes this clear with such battle cries as "I have a long score to settle" and "I want--revenge!" (94). These words become increasingly violent and before long they become mixed with a promise of destruction, such as the one directed to Cleeve when Diana states, "I should like to punish him! . . . I should like to see him suffer for his treachery! I should have no pity on him" (200). Similarly, when referring to Dimitrius, she says, "I,--his 'subject'--shall have him in my power!" (215). What Diana is ultimately confronted by is the dehumanizing effect that patriarchy--or, any other authoritarian hierarchy--engenders. Although she has attained a position of inviolable autonomy by the novel's end, she is only able to do so by becoming "free from all feeling" (311), declaring, "I am Diana May,--Diana May with wrinkles round her eyes and 'feelings' in her stupidly warm heart!--but she is dead! I live!" (305). Indeed, there is no remnant left of the once warm and kind woman of the novel's beginning: in her place, there is only a cruel coldness as the new Diana becomes the mirror image of her male oppressors, such as Dimitrius, who "would care nothing for the loss of a thousand lives, if by such sacrifice he could attain the end in view" (298). There is no real victory, then, in Diana's final, emancipated position. Having lost all "feeling . . . as far as human beings . . . are concerned" and "all association with humanity" (246), she ceases to exist in human terms. This observation is reinforced by the narrator, who defines human life as "a mass of atoms who are 'feeling' things and trying to express their feelings to each other" (8). With the loss of her sympathetic faculties, Diana can feel nothing but the thrill of power, and, by the narrator's definition, she ceases to exist.

Between them, "Carmilla" and The Young Diana thus present a troubled vision of the female situation. Unlike the politically conservative examples of vampire fiction we have dealt with in the previous chapter, these two works are decidedly sympathetic towards the cause of women, and--certainly in The Young Diana and possibly in "Carmilla"--even go so far as to leave their vampiric heroines alive and liberated at the conclusion of the narratives. Yet, for all their sympathy, neither Le Fanu nor Corelli is able to envision a truly positive outcome, since their female characters can only attain freedom by patterning their new ideology after the patriarchal system that initially oppresses them. In the end, it is a hopeless situation in which the only real choice is whether to remain a slave or become an enslaver. The question that remains, though, is whether this scenario is entirely the result of external social factors or also a product of internal character traits. As will be shown in the following chapter, this question has become a central issue in the vampire fiction of recent years.

Notes

1 As evidence of this observation, one need only consider the extremely limited number of pages in Dracula which are written from the perspective of Lucy, who--quite unlike Mina--comes close to voicing open defiance of the patriarchal values imposed upon her. Even more telling is the case of Webber's novel, in which not a single scene is described from Etherial's perspective. Politically dangerous, the thoughts of these women are censored by the very writers who create them.

2 Such an explicit demonstration of aristocratic sentiment raises the question of whether the central issue here has more to do with social class than with gender, especially given the number of critics--such as Burton Hatlen, in his essay "The Return of the Repressed/Oppressed in Bram Stoker's Dracula"--who take a Marxist or sociological approach to vampire fiction. Yet, as they apply to the female vampire, the matters of class and gender are inter-twined, rather than mutually exclusive. Indeed, a gender-based reading of vampire tales is only strengthened by the inordinate number of female vampires who hail from the wealthy, leisured class. These women have advanced to the very zenith of

sanctioned female possibility, an apex which is clearly unsatisfying and disappointing, and from which the only recourse is the rebellion offered by vampirism.

3 Taken at face value, Carmilla's lack of religious devotion is simply part of traditional vampiric nature. Yet, when vampiric behavior is assigned to women, it becomes far more suggestive than when assigned to men: after all, it is in no way unusual for a male to be associated with penetration and a domination. For a woman, however, to be a vampire is to be a rebel, to be her gender opposite. Hence, a male vampire rejects God much like a wayward son argues with his father; when Carmilla speaks against God, however, she is necessarily rejecting all the male control He symbolizes.

4 Again, the connection to Stoker's novel is clear, with Carmilla's implicit threat mirroring Dracula's promise, "Your girls that you all love are mine" (312).

5 The reaffirmation of masculine power that Waller observes is further demonstrated by the implied authority of Hesselius, the male doctor who supplies Le Fanu's male narrator with the details of "Carmilla" and the other stories incorporated into In a Glass Darkly (1897). Like Stoker, Le Fanu frames his work with the words of men,

thus clearly indicating which gender is assumed to have final authority as its privilege.

6 On the surface of the novel, of course, Carmilla's abandonment is simply the chosen means of admitting her into the homes of her victims. Yet, there is more here than just an intentional deception by Carmilla's mother: Laura suggests this when she observes "a glance . . . not quite so affectionate as one might have anticipated" being directed from the mother to the child (27). Similarly, when recounting the manner in which Carmilla's mother leaves her daughter with him, the General recalls Carmilla's plaintive cry, "She did not even look up" (446).

Chapter III: Journey's End

"Dracula was a silly book."

-- Suzy McKee Charnas,
The Vampire Tapestry

With the advent of the late twentieth century, vampire fiction continues to undergo a process of ideological change. Just as Le Fanu and Corelli call into question the position of women living under patriarchal rule, many of the more recent authors take an even more extreme position as they explore and lament the effects of patriarchy--and particularly the human impulses which give rise to it--upon all of its members, male and female alike. What results is a series of texts that diametrically oppose the political message of their earliest progenitors, for while such writers as Stoker and Webber steadfastly defend the patriarchal system, their latter-day counterparts cry out to dismantle it.

One of the more pronounced examples of this new message can be seen in Suzy McKee Charnas's The Vampire Tapestry (1980). On the surface of the novel, however, one finds only the ideological trappings of earlier works of vampire fiction as Charnas sets in place a system of male rule identical to that presented in Dracula. This is made particularly clear in the case of Katje de Groot, in whom Charnas succinctly captures the traditional powerlessness of women. By her own admission, Katje has "no skills, no knowledge" (33), a situation she attributes to her husband's unyielding refusal to allow her to work. Denied the opportunity to obtain the benefits of her own labor, she is further oppressed when she is denied access to her husband's earnings, the bulk of which are donated to a South African political movement with which she fails to identify (5). There is more at issue here than simply economic power, for even Katje's right to think for herself is taken away from her: "I never talk politics," she says, because that "was the first thing Hendrik had demanded of her" (12-13). To all such demands, Katje "acquiesced like a good wife" (13). Yet, in the end, Katje's abject prostration before the rules and demands of the patriarchal system is of little avail: upon her husband's death, and the consequent loss of the financial power upon which she has been made to depend, Katje finds herself reduced to an even more ignoble station as she falls from her position as a "lady of leisure" to that of a "maid" (21). Nor is Katje alone in her underprivileged situation, as Miss Donelly demonstrates when she bitterly observes that at the university where she works, men are paid "half as much again or more" than women for equal work (34). In short, the only right a woman has under this system is the right to remain a victim: Katje discovers this fact first-hand when she is chastized by a male co-worker for walking alone at night while a rapist stalks the neighborhood (22). The only alternative, and the one which she finally embraces, is to gender herself male, after the fashion of the many female vampires we have already considered. While not a vampire herself, Katje is empowered by similar means when she acquires a gun--along with all of its attendant phallic implications of violence and destruction--and momentarily becomes the aggressor as she begins "stalking" Weyland (24). When the confrontation finally occurs, Katje even manages to emerge the victor when she succeeds in shooting the vampire. Her success is a hollow one, however, for it cannot be accomplished without her first abandoning feminine identity. With women thus forced to choose between living submissively in the shadow of men or adopting the violent ideology these men represent, it is with a great deal of prescience that Katje's friend Nettie observes, "A man's the only chance most girls have of getting up in the world" (35).

The traditional narrative background Charnas creates for her vampire novel is further developed by the interaction of her male characters, who display the same challenging, pugnacious nature that Stoker attributes to his cast of men in Dracula. The university environment of the novel's opening section--a patriarchal setting to be sure, presided over by a male dean and financially biased towards the male staff--is described as a place where political "backbiting," "ambushes and even killings" are a recurring fact of life (12). So, too, with the rest of society in this novel: it is a world where the male art dealer, McGrath, strives to control and manipulate Elmo and the others who are contracted to serve him

(193), and where the petty criminal, Roger, is able to give imperious commands to his fellow felon, Wesley, because "he had something on [him] and wasn't interested in hearing about his problems" (50). Throughout the novel, this constant struggle to dominate provides the common denominator behind male relationships, becoming a legacy that is passed on from one generation to the next, which is readily seen when Charnas describes the implicit violence exhibited by Mark's father at the baseball game:

> He shouted and sweated, and he pounded Mark's shoulder to drive home to him every ecstatic moment of impact. Mark felt those heavy hands trying to pummel him into some kind of fellowship of force. It was Dad's idea of closeness to a teenage son. (95)

Violence thus becomes an integral part of the male ideology, which is based entirely upon the value of authoritative strength and the ability to use it. Under this system, women--and non-aggressive men--are seen as being little more than the embodiment of weakness, a fact which Mark discovers first-hand when his father chastizes him for "crying like a girl" (58).

Charnas completes her depiction of the traditional system of patriarchy with a demonstration of the male affinity for isolation, thus deftly co-joining Stoker's world of male violence with Le Fanu's vision of male solitude. Throughout this novel, male characters are forever retreating from emotional contact: such is the case when Floria Landauer's son-in-law, Nick, abandons his wife and children for no discernable reason other than to be rid of them (165). The result is a vision of men withdrawing into what they perceive to be safer, internal worlds of their own design. Roger, for instance, attempts to hold the outside world at bay by living within an apartment that is fortified with "barred windows, grilles on the back doors, even strands of wire strung along the top of the wooden fence" (56). It is Mark, however, who best displays this male behavior when he repeatedly sequesters himself alone in his room--forgetting "Roger, his parents, and even the vampire" (52)--and draws his imaginative plans for a space station that is significantly "set up for a single human operator" (81). Mark thus becomes an archetypal male, striving both to conquer the universe and to remain completely independent: "The main thing," he maintains, "was not to let anybody reach you" (53).

In stark contrast to these masculine tendencies, Charnas presents a set of feminine traits that are equally in keeping with the pattern of vampire literature as we have explored it up to this point. Once more, the emphasis is upon the female impulse towards community and interconnectedness. This is apparent from the start of the novel, when Weyland's public discussion of vampiric nature is interrupted by a young woman who asks about the loneliness that such a solitary creature must suffer (29). A similar concern is expressed by Mrs. Sayers, who steadfastly refuses to allow Weyland to remain apart from his neighbors; instead, she attacks his self-imposed isolation with a steady barrage of paperback novels (245), hot tea (247), and other homely comforts. At each turn in The Vampire Tapestry, there is always a woman offering something of herself to comfort others: it is Alison, for instance, who declares a belief in being "good with people" (267) and it is hardly a coincidence that the novel's two psychiatrists, Floria and Lucille, are both women. It is a unique value system that this community of women share, one which is firmly based upon the cultivation of interpersonal relationships, and which is altogether unlike the opposing male doctrine of competition and emotional withdrawal. Nowhere is this point made more clearly than in the opposing reactions men and women express towards Weyland's captivity: whereas Roger and Alan Reese seek only to exploit the vampire, Julie tries to save him when she performs an exorcism of sorts and proclaims, "I declare the caged man free" (78). What Roger's one-time girlfriend, Bobbie, says about Julie is in fact true of virtually every woman in the novel: "Julie has this different approach . . . a warmer sort of attitude and these really glowing, positive vibrations" (77). The end result of this "different approach" is a vision of Woman as being a combination of nurturer and communicator, healer and interconnector. This nurturing role can be seen in such instances as Lucille's mothering anxiety over Floria's health and state of mind (111), Dorothea's worrying concern for Irv (261), and an unnamed woman's alarm at Weyland's lack of a proper diet which prompts her to purchase and prepare food for him (246). This same evidence supports the female role as the catalyst behind human relationships, but Charnas goes even further in her argument of this last point by clearly identifying art--and the deeply emotional acts of creation, communication and interrelation that lie behind it--almost exclusively with her female characters, among whom Floria, Dorothea, Letty, and Jane are all either amateur or professional artists. Reduced to its simplest level, Charnas's message is that while men destroy, women create.

Against this black and white backdrop of gender politics, the novel's vampire, Weyland, clearly stands out as a bold example of malehood. He is physically dominating and prone to violent outbursts, as is demonstrated when he verbally, and then physically, abuses the student who scratches the fender of Weyland's prized Mercedes (15); and as for Weyland's love of expensive automobiles, this only serves to identify him further with the patriarchal values that equate the accumulation of material objects with status, power, and self-worth. Weyland also displays the characteristically male desire for solitude and isolation. Of course, a degree of secrecy is what one would expect to be a necessary part of vampiric life, but Weyland exhibits this tendency to extremity: even the concept of family holds no value for him, for he believes that raising offspring would only "sire his own rivals" (26). The result is that Weyland becomes, in the words of Miss Donelly, "a ruthless, self-centered bastard" (31)--an epithet that Weyland would undoubtedly approve of, and one which can be worn as a badge of honor in male society.

Weyland is more, however, than a mere representative of male values: in truth, he is the very pinnacle of masculine achievement. He is described as "cold and self-sufficient" (118) and a "heartless predator" (21), thus existing as what Mark and the other males only strive to be. Weyland makes proud mention of this fact when he proclaims

> The corporeal vampire [is] by definition the greatest of all predators, living as he would off the top of the food chain. Man is the most dangerous animal, the devourer or destroyer of all others, and the vampire preys on man. (25)

Thus firmly established as the ultimate authority in a patriarchal society, Weyland further distances himself from the lower ranks by repeatedly referring to the human race as "cattle" (39). Weyland explains the necessity of such a view by claiming that it "keeps prey and predator distinct" (134): this, too, is a reflection of male ideology, for one of the most fundamental axioms of the patriarchal structure is that a man can benefit only at another's expense, and therefore cannot allow himself to identify with his victim, who must be fully objectified and denied all subjective existence. Of course, the primary focus of Weyland's depredations are not men at all: by his own admission, Weyland "victimizes the already victimized" by feeding primarily upon women and homosexual males (132). After all, what could be more patriarchal than preying upon the marginalized victims of patriarchy?

Weyland's self-proclaimed authority does not go unchallenged, though: like Dracula before him, he is immediately set up by other equally ambitious males. Reese, for instance, is clearly presented as a ruling patriarch in his own right with the constant references to his Satanic "followers" (195, 282) and his "men" (282). Roger, too, is an authority figure of sorts, being the undisputed leader of the gang comprised of himself, Wesley, and Mark. The real display of their patriarchal beliefs, however, is seen in their common attitude towards Weyland. Roger, who imprisoned Weyland in the first place, sees in the vampire nothing more than the opportunity "to get incredibly rich" (60). The same manipulative and parasitic greed is also displayed by Reese: this is made emphatically clear when Weyland says of his occult rival, "Reese wants . . . to use me, to tear out my life and devour it, as men once ate the hearts of slain enemies in order to acquire their strength and skill in battle" (69). Yet, there is much more occurring here than simply an instance of patriarchal infighting; in fact, rather than being treated as a legitimate rival (as is the case with Dracula in Stoker's novel), Weyland is disempowered and marginalized in a manner quite similar to that of his human prey. Whereas he was once the owner of material wealth --and hence the possessor of power and status--Weyland is now stripped of his possessions and what little remains is quickly absorbed by the price Mark exacts for small acts of kindness, until Weyland finds himself without the means of paying for them (70). Even more telling is Roger's initial act of purchasing his prisoner (47), which serves to objectify Weyland in much the same way that he denies the subjectivity of his own victims by referring to them as cattle. It is the imprisonment itself, though, that best symbolizes Weyland's new position as victim, yet even here there is more than may at first be apparent, for it is this loss of freedom that marks the first clear connection between the vampire and his prey: just as he locked Katje in his car preparatory to attacking her (36-7), he now becomes a similar victim of the male impulse to control and dominate.

It is at this point, with Weyland made the unwilling victim of his own patriarchal values, that Charnas's novel breaks away from the early tradition of vampire fiction, which, as we have seen, is concerned largely with the defense of those values. Instead, Charnas launches an attack upon the male ideology--but unlike Le Fanu and Corelli, she chooses a male vampire as the medium for her message. The rational behind this choice is one that critics have been quick to identify: Veronica Hollinger observes that Weyland "is emasculated [which] results in a 'feminization'" (155), while Anne Cranny-Francis explores the issue to somewhat greater depths when she writes,

> [W]hat is revealed is not the monster, the biologically different, the 'other', in the woman, but the woman in the monster. Bereft of power, Weyland is placed in the traditional female role. Restrained in a cell-like room, he is put on display, an object of gaze, his subjectivity denied. (162)

Weyland's forced identification with female powerlessness becomes even more apparent when one considers that, when he is put on display to the crowds that gather in front of his cell, it is his act of vampiric feeding that is being gazed upon. Such feeding is, of course, a symbolically sexual activity; what thus results is the sexual exploitation of his body for the profit of the men who control him. As Cranny-Francis observes (162), Weyland is made the victim of even sexual violence when Reese overpowers him and forces open his genitally-suggestive mouth (65).

The reason for Weyland's inclusion in this discussion of the literary tradition of the female vampire is thus made clear: he is made the vehicle for exploring the female position in a male-dominated society. It is not just to the sufferings of women that Weyland is exposed, however: at the very moments that he is victimized, he is simultaneously drawn towards the feminine traits within himself. It is here that we find the central focus of the novel's criticism of the patriarchal system, for what follows is the criticism of male values by a once empowered male who comes to realize the inadequacy of patriarchy. Initially, the change in Weyland is a subtle one, occurring when he first admits his need for the aid of another person--in this case, for something so simple as the ability to walk--and leans on Mark's shoulder (53). This simple admission immediately grows into a much larger one when Weyland then begs Mark, "Stay and talk" (54). The message here is clear: finally stripped of all his male privileges, Weyland looks within himself and finds the very need for community and interconnection that is traditionally ascribed to women. This issue is explored even more openly in Weyland's relationship with Floria, which, being the close relationship between a psychiatrist and a patient, becomes a profoundly intimate act of communication. The end result is that additional layers of male ideology are stripped away from the vampire. For instance, the same need for interpersonal connection that Weyland displays with Mark is shown with even greater emphasis when Floria notes that it "seems of concern" to Weyland that she believe what he tells her of his life (150), as if he no longer feels able to live a male life of secrecy and isolation. This is stated more clearly still when

Floria asks Weyland if he wishes he could enjoy the company of another vampire and he candidly admits, "I long for it" (155)--a far cry from his earlier claim that even his own children would represent nothing more to him than potential rivals. This, then, is the therapy that Weyland undergoes as he learns how to look inward and identify his very real need for the comfort of other creatures, the conclusion of which is marked by the lovemaking that finally takes place between the patient and his teacher: indeed, the change this represents is a profound one, for while Weyland's sexual past, by his own admission, has been largely masturbatory and autonomous (137), his new-found need for closeness propels him into the very heart of human intimacy.

Not surprisingly, Weyland's new-found identification with female ideology is accompanied by his concurrent rejection of male values: it is not long after being imprisoned, for example, before he decries the patriarchal values behind Reese's works of occult lore, claiming that the books are "scarcely readable" because they are so "self-importantly conspirational" (82). Similarly, under Floria's tutelage of role-playing therapy, Weyland surrenders his typically male desire "to feel in control" (121):

> "The only way to reach your goal is through the process, and you don't drive the therapy process like a train. You can only help the process happen, as though you were helping a tree grow" [said

> Floria].
>
> "These games are part of the process?"
>
> "Yes."
>
> "And neither you nor I control the games?"
>
> "That's right." (123)

It is more than just control that Weyland gives up, however. In the end, he rejects even the fundamental basis--self-orientation, self-definition--of patriarchal values. Instead, he chooses to embrace an interconnecting, outreaching approach to life: whereas he was once the epitome of male isolation, he admits that the self cannot be fully realized without the help and support of others and says, to his memory of Floria, "I came to you, as it turned out, for inward vision" (249).

With Weyland's previously held beliefs thus consciously and deliberately abandoned, Charnas takes her protagonist's transformation one final step further as he is led to develop his own ability to identify and empathize with the plights of the people around him. It is a process that Floria begins in her role-playing therapy, in which she encourages Weyland to imagine himself in the place of his victims (133). At first, Weyland refuses, claiming that he must "draw the line at erasing the necessary distance that keeps prey and predator distinct" (134), but he has long since passed the point of being able to withstand the force of his internal changes. Instead, he is led by an almost irresistible impulse to view the world through the eyes of other people. The result is

Weyland's fascination with art, which, as we have earlier observed, is a decidedly female mode of expression in the novel. As he watches the opera, Tosca, Weyland discovers art to be an irrepressible force of revelation, one which "pierced him and nailed him in his place" as it overwhelms his imagination (207). It is at this point that what little remains of Weyland's patriarchal defenses crumbles altogether, for as he gazes with rapt attention at the predator/prey relationship between Scarpia and Tosca, he finally comes to empathize fully with the victim's fear:

> Tosca's cries drew from him a faint whining sound: he too had been pursued by merciless enemies, he too had been driven to the extremity of desperation. Tosca fled Scarpia, darting behind the desk from which pens and papers scattered to the floor. The dance of hunting rushed toward a climax. Weyland trembled. (209)

Thus "irrevocably opened to the power of . . . art," Weyland imaginatively comes to recognize "aspects of himself in . . . his human livestock" (226). No longer a believer in the masculine dream of self-realization through an absolute union of autonomy and power, Weyland is led to discover a more feminine truth, one which is rooted in the discovery that each individual is part of a larger, interconnected group. Weyland is quick to apply this lesson of art to the reality of daily life, for he is able to see that Floria's notes about him serve a similar function in their ability to allow him to catch "glimpses through another's eyes of himself" (247). Earlier in the novel, Weyland asks Floria, "How did you grow so real?" (175) and now he learns the answer to his query: by developing a sense of imagination and empathy, he is able to realize another person, and therefore to realize himself. In effect, Weyland develops a conscience.

A conscience is not all that Weyland acquires, however, for in that same moment the seed of his own destruction is placed within his hands. The problem is one that Cranny-Francis discusses:

> Once emotional engagement occurs, rather than emotional manipulation, equality results. But patriarchy is not based on equality; it is based on dominance-submission, hunter-victim relationships. . . . Emotional engagement has taken place. Weyland is no longer a vampire. (167)

This equation between patriarchy and vampirism is a particularly valid one, for Weyland cannot exist as a vampire if he is unable to remain a dominant predator who feels nothing for the sufferings of his prey. It is an issue both practical and philosophical, in which Weyland is torn between the joyous possibilities of human community and the now impossible demands of his fundamentally patriarchal existence: on the one hand, Weyland's relationship with Floria is the means of his spiritual awakening, while on the other it is also "a sign of his corruption" (180). All he can do is to wonder helplessly, "What will it make of me? A predator paralyzed by an unwanted empathy with his prey?" (161).

Weyland's question bears with it yet greater urgency in the light of Irv's self-imposed death. Even this kind and gentle man, who is forever taking the time to help and comfort those around him as if he is somehow the one major exception to the male norm, is finally unable to integrate his need for community with his traditional masculinity. Like Weyland, Irv is caught between conflicting impulses, as Dorothea suggests when she observes, "He was used to us coming to him for comfort and encouragement, not the other way around" (275). Of course, Irv finally does try to reach out in need to another person, and it is again Dorothea who makes this clear when she tells Weyland, "[H]e had warm feelings for you. . . . He turned to you for the support one man should be able to give another" (275). Yet, it is this very support that men cannot share, at least not without violating their own identity as men, and Irv realizes the impossibility of his situation when he writes, "I am very tired of being strong" before finally killing himself (273).

Irv's lesson is not lost on Weyland, but the vampire, too, is unable to chart a path to a new, non-patriarchal future. All he is able to do is to reject the aggression upon which his existence is based. Hence, in his final meeting with Reese, Weyland is no longer a rival patriarch; instead, he becomes a potential victim striving to save himself from a patriarchal monster, much like Katje, who shoots Weyland only as a means of "self-defense" (69). The resulting act of violence, in which Reese is killed, is therefore a defensive one, with Weyland choosing to "hunt the hunter in [Weyland's] own house" (280). Moreover, it is a direct blow to the structure of patriarchy itself, with Weyland scorning men like Reese when he reflects that "he had known men like this in other times--the ones who stood apart and manipulated others in fear and contempt" (284). There is no lasting victory here, however, for Weyland--like Irv--finds that rejecting the values of patriarchy is to destroy his own place in the world. The novel thus arrives at a troubling conclusion of nihilism and helplessness as it wrestles with the futility of Weyland's situation. He is relentlessly torn between the words "I care" (290) and his own conviction that he has become "[a]fflicted by attachment" (293), and trapped between these opposing values, he suffers his own form of defeat when he is left with no alternative but to enter his prolonged, vampiric sleep as a means of withdrawing from a world in which he no longer has a place. Charnas's final message is consequently a problematic one, for while the apparent impetus behind The Vampire Tapestry is unquestionably to attack patriarchal values from within the patriarchy itself, the novel's conclusion shows only that such an attack is doomed to failure. While those values are certainly criticized, the lesson we are left with is one not of change, but rather of retreat.

This theme of survival in the face of oppressive patriarchal values has fast become one of the central issues in recent works of vampire fiction. In Whitley Strieber's The Hunger (1981), for example, the same questions are asked, but only to be answered with an even more troubling conclusion. According to Strieber, the root cause of this injustice lies not in the system of patriarchy, but in a fundamental and universal impulse towards violence that is shared equally between men and women, and of which patriarchy is but one possible example.

Strieber's argument begins with the apparent contrast of our patriarchal past and our supposedly egalitarian present, a comparison which is achieved through vivid flashbacks into Miriam's personal history. In each of these recollections, this female vampire is seen desperately fleeing from one patriarchal society to the next--among them the Roman Empire, the Byzantine Empire, fifteenth century London, and eighteenth century Swabia--never more than a single step ahead of incarceration, torture, and death. In utter contrast to this dark and violent past, the novel's modern-day setting finds Miriam's flight at an end; instead, she now enjoys a safe and stable existence in a suburban dwelling that is described as a "red-brick row house with . . . white marble trim and window boxes full of flowers" (172). In short, it is Miriam's long-sought destination, a safe haven from persecution, a place in which to plant her roses and to enjoy music and fine wine: as Strieber writes, "It was all so fresh and light" (172).

Of course, it is not the house which allows Miriam to live her life so safely, but rather the society of which she is now a part, particularly that society's lack of any overt patriarchal structure. Strieber goes to great lengths to establish this in his presentation of a series of male and female couples, with the members of each couple sharing equal degrees of power and status. For instance, Phyllis Rockler and Charlie Humphries form between them a partnership of professional parity, with Phyllis being a lab animal handler and computer technician and Charlie being Riverside's blood expert. Similarly, the relationship between Tom and Sarah is another meeting of equals: Sarah is a brilliant gerontologist and psychiatrist poised on the verge of scientific discovery, while Tom is described as "a scientist-administrator with powerful credentials" (49). Even Miriam is able to partake of this new age of gender equality, and her relationship with John--another vampire with the same powers and predatory nature--is yet another instance of equality between the sexes. In each of these cases, the male and female characters function as teammates, contributing equally and sharing equally in both their professional and personal lives. Patriarchy, it would seem, has come to an end.

One of the most striking aspects of this new social order is the pronounced desire for a sense of interconnectedness and community. In previous works of vampire fiction, we have seen that this value is almost exclusively a female one, running contrary to the ideology of empowered males. Yet, in Strieber's novel, the desire for human warmth and sharing transcends gender, becoming nothing short of a universal need. In the case of Tom and Sarah, this shared trait is made apparent by Tom's own thoughts, in which he admits that at "night he wanted [someone] who would shelter him" (95). In turn, Sarah gives voice to an identical need when she wonders "if there could ever be anything more than the desire to fill the hollowness inside" (109). The answer at which they each arrive is the presence of the other: as Sarah goes "gratefully into Tom's arms" (46), Tom can only observe that it is "so comfortable to feel her" (53). This same pattern can also be observed between Miriam and John, beginning with the opening lines of the novel as John finds himself wanting Miriam "as he always did at moments of tension" (2). Indeed, as his tension grows, so does his need for Miriam's companionship until, finding himself suddenly facing his own unexpected mortality, he desperately beseeches her, "Don't leave me!" (69). As for Miriam, she is no different, being "miserable with loneliness" (89) and wanting the warmth of a relationship above all other things: "She wanted so for [John] to hold her once again. She had been his prize, his adored one. In the end that was all that mattered, that was life itself, to be needed" (89).

Yet, despite such repeated pleas for the comfort of mutual affection, Strieber's characters are simultaneously haunted by the unreality of such love and their inability to attain it: such is the case when Miriam finds herself passionately "wishing that--just once--she dared surrender herself to another being. But she remained wary" (69). This instance of Miriam's essential reserve--as she withdraws from the very contact she supposedly seeks--is pregnant with meaning in the novel, for it marks the first admission that something is fundamentally wrong with Strieber's post-patriarchal society. Oppressive and discriminating gender values are no longer a factor, but the sexes still seem no closer to a final and trusting union.

The early signs of this problem of distrust are expressed by each of the four major characters as a feeling of discontent with both their mate and their relationship with that person. In the case of Tom and Sarah, this begins with their mutual despair over each other's self-absorption. Tom, for instance, feels frustrated and unappreciated, suspecting that Sarah "was and remained blind to the problems he experienced as an administrator" (47); instead, he finds "some deep thing in Sarah, a kind of cruel yearning, heedless of herself and others" (47). At the same time, however, Sarah is found lamenting the fact that "Number One was never far from mind with Tom" (45), who "would do anything . . . to get what he wanted" (93). It is as if they are separated by an unbridgeable chasm despite their mutual need for each other's affection. Indeed, the act of love itself fails to bring them any closer: even after making love, we are told, "[t]he barrier remained" (99). In the face of this interpersonal limitation, it is not surprising that they should begin to wonder "how long they would last as a couple" (93), and Tom speaks for both of them when he concludes that "to assume that he could ever really know her heart, even as her lover, would be very foolish" (129).

As the novel progresses, the reservations Tom and Sarah feel about each other are found to be eminently justified as their relationship rapidly deteriorates into a struggle to possess, control, and dominate each other in a manner highly evocative of the patriarchal struggle that characterizes so many of the earlier works of vampire fiction. It is Tom who begins this development when he experiences a thrilling sense of elation and "glee" (48, 52) upon first discovering that the setbacks to Sarah's research project "would make her seek the comfort of being a junior partner again--and a part of him welcomed the power her need would confer" (48). Tom thus falls back into a pattern of traditionally male behavior, and what follows is his increasing desire to control and dominate "his Sarah" (220), whom he is "avid to possess" (54). In the end, Tom's dominating nature escalates to the point of very nearly committing sexual violence against Sarah: his sexual behavior is described as "aggressive" (190), and when Sarah attempts to refuse his advances, his "impulse was to force her" (97). Yet, for all the similarity this behavior bears to the gender politics of patriarchy, it is not to be construed that Strieber is simply following the same political argument we have seen so many times before. Quite the contrary, patriarchy is not even at issue here, a fact which Strieber makes perfectly clear when he presents in Sarah an even greater degree of callous and violent impulses. In Sarah's case, these observations start with her treatment of the rhesus monkeys upon which she performs her experiments: wondering to herself whether she has the right to cause them such pain and suffering, she coldly concludes that their lives are "a fair price" for the fruits of her research (65). When she is later infected with Miriam's blood and undergoing the transformation into a vampiric existence, the violent thoughts that mark her passage into unlife take on an added significance in the light of Tom's behavior. Like him, she experiences an impulse --albeit a much greater one--toward violence: she imagines attacking the X ray technician, Marty, longing "to hit him, to pulp his fat face" (238). Later, when she meets an unknown man in the streets, she is again overcome with a vision of "his head flying like a melon beneath the wheels of a passing bus . . . the blood spurt[ing] from his neck" (262): even a total stranger is not safe from Sarah's sociopathic thoughts. Unlike Tom, however, Sarah is subsequently able to act upon these aggressive thoughts, largely as the result of her growing vampiric nature. She begins by slapping Tom "so hard she all but lost her balance" (244) and beating Hutch into unconsciousness (256), before taking the innocent life that Miriam feeds her (264-65) and then finally killing the man who was her mate (292). As a vampire, Sarah demonstrates a dominating and antisocial tendency far in excess of that shown by Tom, but together they reveal an unsettling and despairing vision of human beings desiring a state of community that their most basic and overpowering instinct actively seeks to destroy.

As if to reinforce this message, Strieber uses the relationship between John and Miriam to repeat the pattern of disillusionment growing into violence--a pattern which can be explored to even greater lengths given the fact that both of these characters are vampires, and are hence predicated upon violent and destructive actions. Like Tom, John comes to feel that his mate is inattentive to his emotional needs, thinking, "he loved her, and now he needed her. Why wouldn't she understand that?" (82). Furthermore, John despairs over what he perceives as Miriam's "sheer coldness" and "the depths of [her] indifference" (160-61). Once again, the result is a reaction that regresses to a desire to control and ultimately to destroy. It begins when John reflects that "it was infuriating to realize to what small degree Miriam belonged to him" (20), and once more it grows into a sexually violent response: gazing upon Miriam in her vampiric sleep, John finds "something pleasing about her helplessness, something that excited him" (34) and which impels him to rape her inert form while simultaneously strangling her (35). Later, when John comes to understand the deception that Miriam has played upon him in her lie that he would live forever, his thoughts of violence come to comprise his entire being. Obsessed with the vengeful promise that he "was going to hurt her" (81), John embarks upon a series of violent actions ranging from the destruction of Miriam's precious roses (174-5) and an effort to grapple with her (82), to an attempt to cut her throat (128) and his last murderous act of releasing the mummified creatures that are the remains of Miriam's past lovers. Again, however, the male's aggression is at least equally matched by the female's. It is subtle at first, with Miriam's professed love for her human companions gradually giving way as she retreats into emotional remoteness and objectifies these people in much the same manner as Charnas's Weyland, with his constant references to human "cattle": Miriam blames John's decline, for instance, upon the declining "strength of the human stock" (41) and her own thoughts reveal that her desire is not just to love a human being, but "to possess one of them" (62). It is this manipulative impulse that ultimately lies at the very foundation of all of Miriam's relationships, each of which is founded upon falsehood as she promises her lover an immortality that she knows she is unable to confer. What results is a schizophrenic and self-contradictory pattern of behavior as she avows her love while simultaneously destroying the objects of that affection; thus do we find her proclaiming love for John in the very midst of burying him alive in her basement (131) and later while finally sealing him in a steel coffin (274). Despite Miriam's impassioned words, however, it is her actions that speak most eloquently and the overwhelmingly powerful image we are left with is of yet another relationship in which two people's need for love is completely overpowered by some darker, mutual impulse to dominate and finally destroy each other.

Again, it must be stressed that Strieber does not ascribe this pattern of escalating violence between men and women to the inherent faults of any gender-based ideology. This is made particularly apparent in the relationship between Miriam and Sarah which, in virtually any other work of vampire fiction, would mark the development of a sisterhood opposed to the male order. In The Hunger, however, this female bond ultimately suffers the same fate as its heterosexual counterparts. The novel deftly plays with this situation, encouraging the reader to find the same sort of feminine community that we have already seen in "Carmilla" and, to a lesser extent, in Dracula: only two days after meeting Sarah, Miriam is seen "already beginning to love the woman" (229), while Sarah responds even more strongly with her thought that she "had not felt this sense of intimate female friendship since she was a child" (183). Yet, the relationship is no different from any other in the novel and it quickly comes to be characterized by emotional withdrawal as the eyes of love are replaced with the gaze of objectification. Such is the case when Miriam reduces Sarah to the status of a possessed item when she thinks, "The little doctor was her new object. Before, Sarah Roberts would have been used and discarded. Now she would be kept" (139). Likewise, Sarah responds with a similarly possessive and objectifying vision when she refers to Miriam as an "experimental animal" (236). It is not surprising, then, when we find that even this relationship comes to be based upon manipulation and lies, with Miriam lying to Sarah about everything from being the last of her kind (234-35) to the true nature of the mortician's soap she gives Sarah as a gift (207), while Sarah engages in a similar effort to deceive when she implicitly supports Miriam's involuntary commitment at Riverside (236-37). In the end, however, it is only violence that is left in the wake of this failed relationship, a violence that begins with Miriam's impulsive desire to slap Sarah (107) and to "draw the life out of" her (106) and which ends with Sarah's attempt to kill Miriam (300) before finally destroying herself.

With each major relationship in the novel thus brought to the same destructive conclusion, Strieber ends The Hunger with a doomed and profoundly fatalistic vision of human affairs, a situation which is only exacerbated by the novel's repetitive insistence that the characters are simply not free to act in any other way. Despite feeling "dirty and crass, seeing such a thing in himself" (188), for instance, Tom is convinced that his manipulative tendencies are "not something he could help" (95); likewise, John is described as "helpless in his actions" of violence (122), not being "able to stop himself" (83). The same sense of futility also surrounds the women, with Sarah's violence being called "involuntary" (283) and Miriam being described as someone who, in the final analysis, simply "could not love" (89).

Of all these characters, it is Tom alone who stops short of actual murder, but this in no way makes him a morally superior character: in truth, he is simply a lesser evil, the human version of the exaggerated humanity represented by the three vampires, and it is here that we arrive at an understanding of what it is that the figure of the vampire comes to represent in Strieber's hands. No longer polarized into the extreme loci of a battle between conflicting gendered ideologies, male and female vampires become fundamentally equal in every sense--equally manipulative, equally deceiving, and equally destructive. The result is that the female vampire finally ceases to exist as a symbol against male oppression, joining instead with her male counterpart to form between them a symbol of the fully realized human self. Sadly, this moment of union fails to bring with it the peace and liberation that female vampires have desperately sought through nearly two centuries of literature. Instead, the struggle for social freedom arrives only at the personal hell of finding that the seeds of selfish oppression grow within us all, male and female alike. It is with justifiable horror that Sarah thus identifies a wantonly destructive "*thing* within her" (292), and even worse is her realization that it had always been with her, "[h]idden, but there" (213).

As divergent as *The Vampire Tapestry* and *The Hunger* might therefore seem to appear in their respective messages--one novel following the established tradition of targeting the ills of patriarchy while the other ascribes those faults to the human heart itself--there is an essential common ground to be found between these two works, one which links them together as we watch the modern era find its own meaning and reflection in the vampire motif. Simply put, it is a shared message of despair. In the end, the issue of whether to blame the patriarchy or simply human nature is subsumed by an even greater concern: with Weyland forced to retreat from the world after discovering the value of humanity and Sarah forced to destroy herself in order to affirm that value, the modern writers of vampire fiction arrive at a disturbing conclusion, indeed. After a long tradition of vampire literature that documents the struggle for freedom and justice, we have arrived at a new tradition that proclaims the hopeless futility of striving after such an impossible goal.

Concluding Remarks

We have traced the literary development of the female vampire through three distinct stages: the conservative defense of patriarchal values, the incensed outrage at gender-biased politics, and finally, the question of whether patriarchy alone is to blame for the state of gender relations. Yet, in illustrating this pattern, we are still left with the question of where it is that vampire fiction has actually arrived, and what its future is to become. On the one hand, the theme of helpless despair at being unable to change society that is found in Charnas's The Vampire Tapestry suggests that an insurmountable wall has been reached, that the revolution has been fought and lost. This, in turn, could be seen as the end of innovative vampire fiction, the political theme of which may appear to be exhausted in the face of forces that are essentially immutable. On the other hand, it is also possible that the writers of vampire tales will follow the lead of Strieber by moving away from political and ideological landscapes and towards internal, psychological mindscapes. Of these two possibilities, the latter seems somewhat more likely, for we have certainly observed in vampire fiction a tendency to reflect prevalent social concerns; hence, in the current age of heightened individualism, it is perhaps to be expected that vampire fiction will focus increasingly upon themes of a personal, rather than merely political, nature. Yet, at the present time, one can do little more than postulate the immediate future of this body of literature: with such a major writer as Chelsea Quinn Yarbro continuing to explore the institution of patriarchy in her historical vampire novels while Anne Rice centers her exploration around the vampiric heart and soul, the matter is clearly far from being settled.

Hence, for the moment, we continue to find vampire fiction--and its frequently female subject--at a crossroads, forced to choose between finding a new way of attacking the system of patriarchy and looking deeper into the human heart for the roots of social injustice. It will be this choice, more than any other factor, that will shape the future of vampire fiction for many years to come.

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